

Changing Schools in Andhra Pradesh

The Experiences of Children and their Caregivers

Uma Vennam, Anuradha Komanduri and Udaya Duggani



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Summary

Moving from one school to another is a significant event for children, marked by new experiences and challenges. Changing schools can be difficult in terms of the curriculum, language, physical facilities in the school, change of friendships and adjusting to new teachers. On the other hand, selecting a school in many cases is not about a single decision made by parents at point their child starts pre-school or primary. Instead, an increasing number of parents make multiple, successive choices, even during their children's earliest schooling. This paper describes children's experiences of school mobility and attempts to fill the gap in the research on changing schools and children's experiences in the Indian context. The paper makes use of three different sets of data from Young Lives: the longitudinal data from the main household and child-level research carried out in 2002, 2006–07 and 2009 (in order to develop school histories of the children); an extensive school survey conducted in 2010 (to study the quality and effectiveness of the education experienced by a sub-sample of Younger Cohort children, then aged 9–10), which uncovered that many children had changed school at least once by the age of 9; and a qualitative sub-study carried out in 2011 that looked into the processes of parental decision-making about schools, the factors that explained school mobility and the children's experiences of moving school. It is argued that that the children's experiences and their adjustment to the new school environment often depended on where the child moved to and the factors that caused the change. Strategic and structural moves did not make it too difficult for the children, but reactive moves seemed to be hard for them. In cases of school change, the burden of adjusting to the new school very often fell on the child, with little help or support from the teacher, school or parents. Any intervention aimed at helping children to manage school change should therefore take into consideration not only the school-level factors but also the family- and community-level factors that cause the move. Government schools and teachers need to be prepared to receive children into the later grades and facilitate a smooth transition.

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About Young Lives

Young Lives is an international study of childhood poverty, following the lives of 12,000 children in 4 countries (Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam) over 15 years. www.younglives.org.uk

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1. Introduction

This paper presents children's experiences of changing schools in Andhra Pradesh, drawing on evidence from Young Lives, an international study of childhood poverty that follows the changing lives of 12,000 children in Ethiopia, India (in the state of Andhra Pradesh),¹ Peru and Vietnam over 15 years. Young Lives uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods (a longitudinal household, child and community survey; a school survey with a smaller sample of the children; and in-depth qualitative research with a yet smaller sample) to investigate the causes and consequences of childhood poverty and the factors that contribute to breaking cycles of poverty and to reducing the inequality that underpins poverty. The study is designed to provide credible evidence to inform the development and implementation of future policies and practices for children.

Findings of this paper have been drawn from both quantitative and qualitative data. We use Young Lives data from three sources:

- Young Lives longitudinal household and child survey data gathered in 2002, 2006–07 and 2009.
- Young Lives school survey conducted in 2010 to study the quality and effectiveness of the education experienced by a sub-sample of Young Lives Younger Cohort children (aged 9–10);

and

- Qualitative research conducted in 2011 that looked into how decisions were made to move children to a different school, as well as the factors that explained the school moves and the children's experiences of moving school.

This paper describes children's experiences of moving to a different school and attempts to fill the gap in existing literature on children's experiences of changing schools in India. The paper commences with a description of the context in which the research findings are discussed. This is followed by a section reviewing international literature on school change. The next section gives details of Young Lives and of the sample and sub-samples. The findings from the longitudinal survey data and school survey data are presented in Section 5 while the qualitative data and the case studies are discussed in Section 6. The final section provides a discussion with policy recommendations.

¹ The Young Lives sample was designed in 2001 to cover the three agro-climatic regions of Andhra Pradesh - Coastal Andhra, Rayalaseema, and Telangana. This paper reports findings for the full sample of children in Andhra Pradesh (before the bifurcation of the state in June 2014).

2. The context: educational scenario in Andhra Pradesh and India

Schooling is an important component of a child's life as most learning takes place in school and a good amount of a child's time is spent there. In many households, schooling is also seen as an investment and as an opportunity to move out of poverty. Most of the parents in the study want their children to have better lives than they have had.

During the recent past, all over India, and in Andhra Pradesh in particular, there has been an increased focus on children's education and as a result the household's investment in schooling has also increased. This has also been the case with poor households, both in urban and in rural areas. Both parents and children have expectations of school outcomes and are often placed in a dilemma regarding choice of school. The educational environment in Andhra Pradesh is characterised by high parental expectations of education, and the complexity of the educational system puts parents in a difficult position when selecting schools.

In the present scenario of increasing choice of schools, including a growing number of private schools, children in India (in Andhra Pradesh in particular) are now changing schools in pursuit of diverse educational alternatives (and sometimes parents relocate their families or make alternative living arrangements). Some of these choices may provide children with an improved educational experience while others provide a worse educational experience and some others continue to provide an educational experience similar to the one left behind. Singh (2013), using Young Lives panel data to estimate value-added models of learning production in private and government schools in Andhra Pradesh, found that in rural areas there was a substantial positive effect of private schools on English, no effect on mathematics and heterogeneous effects on Telugu for 8–10-year-old children; at 15 years, there were significant but modest effects on Telugu, mathematics and receptive vocabulary. In urban areas, there was no evidence of a positive private school effect. Children in private schools assessed their school experience more positively. However, frequent change of schools, or 'school mobility' (Rumberger et al. 1999), is increasingly becoming the norm, due in part to where schools are located and how schooling is structured. For example, in some areas only primary schools are available, which means that children must move schools after Grade 5; government residential schools for some social groups,² sought after by many parents, are located only in certain places; and private upper primary and secondary schools are not available in some rural areas.

The Indian education sector is a complex interplay of public and private inputs. While the debate on the relative effectiveness of the two continues, there has been a rapid spread of private schools since 2000. What has been particularly significant, is the advocacy for private schools for children from poor families (see for example, Tooley et al. 2007, 2010). These

2 These groups include the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, two significant groups of historically disadvantaged people recognised in the Constitution of India. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes comprise about 16.6% and 8.6%, respectively, of India's population (according to the 2011 Census).

schools, referred to as 'budget' or low-fee private (LFP) schools, have been portrayed as responding to the growing demand of poor families for 'good-quality', English-medium education, and the fees they charge are relatively low. The prominent studies on this are Tooley et al. (2007, 2010), conducted in Hyderabad during 2003–05. The findings have been used as a reference point by other researchers (Baird 2009; Joshi 2008) who have also studied and commented on low-fee schools. These authors have reiterated the findings of Tooley and his colleagues, especially in relation to the preference of poor people for LFP schools as against government primary schools. Studies in rural areas by Srivastava (2007) and Harma (2011) have also pointed to the 'universal preference' of poor and disadvantaged households for LFP schools or mentioned them as a 'popular choice'. Drèze and Sen (2002) and Kingdon (1996, 1998, 2007) also report that there are gaps in the efficiency and effectiveness of private schools over government schools, while Tooley and Dixon (2003, 2006) also echo these findings for Andhra Pradesh.

It may be noted that Young Lives has a pro-poor sample, and the type of private schools attended by the sample children are, in many cases, the LFP schools, which are run with a bare minimum of facilities, offering just a few grades/classes and hiring poorly qualified and untrained teachers. Such schools are available in great numbers in urban areas and parents make use of the available choice in the hope of providing a better opportunity for their children. Private schools are poorly regulated and enjoy complete autonomy in terms of management, staffing and pedagogy.

One of the key decisions that parents feel under pressure to make is whether their child should be attending a government school or a private one. This decision is by and large guided by the belief that the quality of education in private schools is better than it is in government schools. This issue is the subject of an ongoing debate in Andhra Pradesh. However, though parents assume that private schools offer high-quality education, this is not the case. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2012 states that private school education is not necessarily of high quality and that children's families' socio-economic and educational background, parental aspirations and the additional support children are given for learning make a far more significant contribution to their performance. Yet the fact remains that the learning gap between government and private school children is widening (ASER 2012: 2).

There is a sizeable body of research looking at government and private school education in India and Andhra Pradesh, mostly at the primary school level. These studies have looked at enrolment, children's performance, factors determining school choice, and other issues in government and private schools. In explaining the factors that influence decisions on school choice, researchers have often given the key ones as economic factors (Cheney et al. 2005; ASER 2008; Iram et al. 2008), parental education, especially if the mother's education level is higher than the father's (Iram et al. 2008), gender and urban/rural location of residence (*ibid.*). An analysis of recent trends in choices made by parents with regard to type of school indicate that poor households also often choose to send their children to a private school because they believe these schools provide better education and future opportunities for their children than the government schools. Better infrastructure, better-quality schooling and the opportunity to acquire English language skills are important criteria in shaping school choices for all social classes. Parents who can access private schools opt for them, and only the very poorest remain in government schools (Sedwal and Kamat 2008). The widespread presence of LFP (primary) schools in rural areas, especially in Andhra Pradesh, and the poor quality of the government schools, often characterised by low achievement, poor attendance and

teacher absenteeism, make parents prefer private schools. In an extensive survey of 20 states, Muralidharan and Kremer (2009) found that in rural areas, 51 per cent of private schools were unrecognised.³

Analysis of the school enrolment data for Andhra Pradesh for 2007–08 (the most recent available) (<http://ssa.ap.nic.in/>) suggests that 60 per cent of primary school children were enrolled in government schools while the remaining 40 per cent attended private schools (Table 1). (Unfortunately data disaggregated by urban/rural location are not available.) The ASER report for rural Andhra Pradesh in 2009 and 2012 indicates an increase of 7–8 percentage points in children being enrolled in private schools, both for the 7–10 age group (33 to 41 per cent) and for 11–14-year olds (22 to 29 per cent) (Table 2).

Table 1. *Primary school enrolment by management type, Andhra Pradesh, 2007–8*

Type of school	% of total	Number
Government	60.4	3,240,634
- State government	5.1	273,999
- Municipalities in urban areas	2.7	143,158
- Local governments in rural areas (MPP/ZPP)*	52.5	2,818,934
- Central government	0.08	4,543
Private	39.5	2,126,315
Private aided	6.1	332,011
Private unaided	33.4	1,794,304
Total		5,366,949

Source: Government departmental data 2007–08, <http://ssa.ap.nic.in/>

Note: MPP (Mandal Praja Parishad) and ZPP (Zilla Praja Parishad) are the top and second levels of local government in rural areas.

Table 2. *Children in different types of school, 2009 and 2012, Andhra Pradesh (rural)*

	7 to 10 years olds (%)						11 to 14 year olds (%)					
	All		Boys		Girls		All		Boys		Girls	
	2009	2012	2009	2012	2009	2012	2009	2012	2009	2012	2009	2012
Government	63.0	57.6	59.0	52.8	67.0	62.3	68.0	65.3	66.0	61.3	70.0	69.4
Private	33.0	40.9	38.0	45.8	29.0	36.0	22.0	29.3	26.0	34.6	19.0	24.0
Other	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.1	0.8	0.2	0.7	0.1	0.9
Not in school	4.0	1.2	4.0	1.0	4.0	1.3	9.0	4.5	8.0	3.4	11.0	5.6

Source: ASER 2008 and 2012

2. 1. Increase in private school enrolment

The phenomenon of private schools in India has been a subject of research for over 15 years now (Harma 2010) and the LFP schools are playing an important, if unsung, role in reaching the poor and satisfying their educational aspirations (Tooley and Dixon 2010). The

³ Unrecognised means unregistered. According to the Right to Education Act (2010) it is mandatory for all private schools to seek the state Government's recognition. The law stipulates that all schools must procure a 'recognition certificate' from the Government and it is renewable every three years. Institutions failing to obtain the certificate can be deemed derecognised. Heavy fines can also be imposed under provisions of the Act.

emergence of LFP schools, has been attributed in part to the failure of government schools in terms of efficiency, equity, infrastructure, instruction and teacher attendance (Baird 2009; Muralidharan and Kremer 2009), as well as to better achievement levels of children attending private schools, who are reported to have better reading and arithmetic skills than those in the government schools (Desai et al. 2010; Kingdon 2007; ASER 2012).

The All-India level private school enrolment rate has been rising steadily since 2006. The percentage of 6 to 14 year olds enrolled in private schools rose from 19 per cent in 2006 to 26 per cent in 2011. In 2012 this figure increased further to 28 per cent. The increase is almost equal in primary school (Grades 1 to 5) and upper primary school (Grades 6 to 8). In 2012, of all private school children (aged 6–14), 58 per cent were boys. Since 2009, private school enrolment in rural areas has been rising at an annual rate of about 10 per cent. If this trend continues, India will have 50 per cent of children in rural areas enrolled in private schools by 2018 (ASER 2012). On the other hand reading levels continue to be a cause for serious concern. More than half of all children in Grade 5 are at least three grade levels behind where they should be. In 2010, nationally, 46 per cent of all children in Grade 5 could not read a Grade 2 level text. This proportion increased to 52 per cent in 2011 and further to 53 per cent in 2012. For Grade 5 children enrolled in government schools, the percentage of children unable to read a Grade 2 level text increased from 49 per cent (2010) to 56 per cent (2011) to 58 per cent (2012).

Having explored the complex interplay of public and private schooling in the Indian context, we now turn to international literature on school mobility and the factors influencing it. Few studies in the Indian context on this issue are available, hence the focus on international literature.

3. Literature review

School mobility has multiple definitions (Rumberger et al. 1999). Although it can be defined according to the number of moves, there are different opinions on what constitutes high mobility: according to Heinlein, Melman and Shinn (2000) highly mobile children are those with six or more moves, while Wood et al. (1993) define them as those with five or six moves. School mobility refers to the occurrence of students changing schools for reasons other than advancing to the next grade (Hartman and Leff 2002; Rumberger 2002); or movement between schools or changes of school, either once or on repeated occasions, at times other than the normal age at which children start or finish their education at a school (Strand and Demie 2007).

Changing school is a significant event for children, marked by new experiences and challenges. It is also a complex issue with multiple causes and effects, which are not always easy to determine. Studies in the USA point out that changing schools frequently, apart from its negative effect on children's achievement (Heinlein, Melman and Shinn 2000; Kerbow, Azcoitia and Buell 2003; Rumberger 2003; Hanushek et al. 2004; Mehana and Reynolds 2004; Engec 2006; Strand and Demie 2006, 2007; Gruman et al. 2008; Raudenbush et al. 2009) can also be difficult for children, leading to behavioural disturbances (Engec 2006; Gruman et al. 2008; Reynolds et al. 2009). While western research studies point out the effects of mobility as negative, neutral or even beneficial (Rumberger et al. 1999; Crowley 2003), depending on the circumstances of the move, the 'multiplier effect' of mobility can compound other issues (Kerbow et al. 2003). Furthermore, where the number of moves

extended beyond six in a child's primary schooling, no parents reported mobility to have had a positive impact on learning (Commonwealth of Australia 2002). Changing schools can be very challenging for the children in terms of the curriculum, language, physical facilities in the school, change of friendships and adjusting to new teachers. Children have to manage a new school environment (Mehana and Reynolds 2004; Rumberger 2003) and have high suspension rates (Engec 2006). Thus how children adjust to and manage school change certainly has its impact on their progress in school and their life after school.

School mobility as reported in Western countries is also associated with family-related factors such as change of residence (Knox 2011; Rumberger 2003), low-income status (Engec 2006; Rumberger 2003; de la Torre and Gwynne 2009; Crowley 2003) and stressful life events such as divorce or job loss (Temple and Reynolds 1999), as well as with several school-related factors such as non-attendance, low academic performance, and grade retention (Rumberger and Thomas 2000; Rumberger 2003). It has also been linked with single-parent families or parents with less education (Alexander et al. 1996) and with migration (Taylor 2010). A child's sense of security and belonging is also affected, particularly for elementary students, who are often uninvolved in the decision and reasons resulting in a change of school (Gruman et al. 2008). What is clear is that selecting a school in very many cases is not about a single decision made at the transition points into pre-school or primary. Instead multiple, successive choices are made even during their children's earliest school years (James and Woodhead 2014).

Burkham et al. (2009) in a study of on the impact of school change on children from kindergarten to third grade using a nationally representative sample of children in the USA, found that in many cases family decisions play a larger role in determining school changes than does school structure, particularly during the first four years of schooling. In Young Lives research in Andhra Pradesh, family-related factors resulted in decisions in favour of young children changing school. The school structure considered for discussion in this context (in Andhra Pradesh) is the pyramid model, where a large number of primary schools are available, even in the rural areas, and the number of schools decreases as the grade increases. As such, in many cases children will be required to change school when moving on to upper primary and high school. In some other cases, it is the boarding arrangement (hostels) provided through the government schools that almost makes school mobility a norm. Can it therefore be said that the children's experiences of school mobility (positive or negative) will be related to the type of move and the factors that caused the move? Whether it is family-related or school-related, mobility is a classic ecological transition, definable as a change in the setting, role or expectations of an individual (Bronfenbrenner 1989). Although such transitions do not always compromise child well-being, and may promote better adjustment in some circumstances, mobility in general has long been found to be associated with lower than average school achievement (Alexander et al. 1996; Gruman et al. 2008; Ream 2005), increased risk of school drop-out (Ou and Reynolds 2008; Rumberger and Larson 1998; South, Haynie and Bose 2007), increased need for remedial education (Alexander et al. 1996; Ou and Reynolds 2008), and social and psychological difficulties (Rumberger 2003; Swanson and Schneider 1999).

Following a Delhi High Court order in 2004 (based on a Supreme Court judgment) that 20–25 per cent of school places in recognised, private, unaided schools in Delhi should be reserved, free of charge, for children from the economically disadvantaged classes, Mallica (2005) looked at the perspectives of some of the children who were admitted under this scheme, i.e. who had moved from government schools to private schools. The author

interviewed children from Grades 2, 3, 4 and 12 about why they liked their new schools. Reasons included teachers being present, not using corporal punishment, giving homework, and good facilities in the school, like good toilets, drinking water and a science laboratory. In terms of adjusting to a new socio-cultural environment with children belonging to the upper and middle classes of society, there did not seem to be many problems. However, these children seemed to differentiate clearly between the two different classes of friends they now had – the ones living in the slums who used bad language and fought most of the time and the ones in the new school who were ‘better’ as they didn’t use bad language or fight like the others. There seems to have been acceptance of the fact that they had been admitted to ‘good’ schools and they should strive to do well here.

From the above it can be observed that much of the research on school mobility comes from the Western world and focuses on the impact of change on academic achievement and other factors but does not actually explore the children’s experiences of changing school from children’s own points of view. (An exception is the research done by Mallica (2005), referred to above.) Very often the decision to change the school of a 6–8-year-old child is that of the caregivers and children are rarely consulted. It is therefore important to explore the experiences of these children who change schools and listen to what they have to say about it.

4. Methodology

Young Lives is tracking two cohorts of children (born in 1994–95 and 2001–02 respectively) over 15 years, with the sample totalling 12,000 children across the four study countries. A total of approximately 3,000 children and households in India are participating in the study, located in 20 rural and urban sites in the state of Andhra Pradesh.

It may be mentioned here that while the Young Lives sample children are broadly representative of diverse groups and household circumstances in Andhra Pradesh, but the sample was selected to be pro-poor and therefore the richest households were excluded (see Kumra 2008 for further information on the Young Lives sample in India). Consequently our research into school choice does not include more privileged groups, who traditionally make extensive use of private education. Our research draws on full-sample household and child surveys carried out in 2002, 2006–07 and 2009 (with two further rounds taking place in 2013 and 2016). We also draw on two sub-studies. An extensive school survey was conducted in 2010 to study the quality and effectiveness of the education experienced by a sub-sample of Younger Cohort children, covering 248 schools (of which 100 were government, 130 private and 18 other types of school, including those run by NGOs) and tracking 950 children to their schools. These children were selected based on their school moves, i.e. the number and type of move. The sample selection ensured that children from rural, urban and tribal areas were included.

Further qualitative research on parental decision-making was carried out in 2011 with a sub-sample of the children included in the school survey of 2010. The sub-sample was selected from communities that reported a high number of children who had moved schools. The children were then selected at random while ensuring that they represented all types of school move. The sub-study was conducted with 30 children and 30 caregivers in three of the 20 Young Lives sites (two rural and one urban), which were purposively selected for having the largest number of school movers between the Round 3 survey (2009) and the

school survey (2010). The purpose of the sub-study was to understand the process of parental decision-making related to the school change and to explore the children's experiences of school change. Parents and children were asked to construct timelines of the educational history of the child. This timeline was then used to facilitate discussion with the caregivers, in order to reveal their perceptions of the changing education sector and the factors that drove decision-making about school choice and change. Using the timeline, the children were asked to respond on what caused the school change, who decided on the school and what their experiences were. The sub-study also included detailed interviews with children, with a focus on describing their experiences of being in the new school, what adjustments they had to make and how they managed these, including the source and nature of support received.

4.1 Research sites

To facilitate an understanding of the context in which the sampled children live and go to school, a brief description of the three sites included in the school survey is provided below.

Sagar⁴ is an urban area in the coastal region of Andhra Pradesh, with a population of 200,000. Households in Sagar are generally better off than other communities within the Young Lives study, although they could not be described as wealthy. Most of the households of Younger Cohort children (67 per cent) were in the top wealth quintile of Young Lives households in 2009,⁵ and for most of them, Telugu is their mother tongue. Many private schools are available. By 2009, Younger Cohort children were still only aged 7–8, yet 32 per cent had moved school once or more since they started Grade 1, in the majority of cases between different private schools.

Perambalur is a poor, forested tribal area in southern Telangana, with a population of under 50,000. Parents typically have low levels of education, and there is less variety of provision. In 2009, the majority of Younger Cohort families (63 per cent) were in the two poorest wealth quintiles, and most children (81 per cent) come from the traditionally disadvantaged Scheduled Tribe or Scheduled Caste backgrounds. While half have Telugu as their first language, many also use a local dialect. Prevalence of school change is high, with 27 per cent of Younger Cohort children having moved school more than once. Movements include from private to government, government to private, government to government and also within the private sector, and children from all wealth quintiles had moved school.

Kalahandi is a remote rural mandal in a forested part of the Rayalaseema region, with a population of just under 30,000. Parents typically have low levels of education and 46 per cent come from a Scheduled Caste background. In 2009, 33 per cent fell into the two poorest wealth quintiles. Nearly all children in this site have Telugu as their mother tongue. Prevalence of school change is also high, with 36 per cent of Younger Cohort children having moved school once by the age of 8, with 61 per cent of these moves being from the government to the private sector.

4 The names of the communities, as well as the children, used in this paper are all pseudonyms.

5 The Young Lives sample is divided into quintiles (groups of equal size), where the lowest quintile (bottom 20%) of families are considered to be the 'poorest' and those in the highest quintile (top 20%) the 'least poor'. Young Lives uses a composite wealth index reflecting the quality of a household's dwelling, use of durable goods and access to basic services.

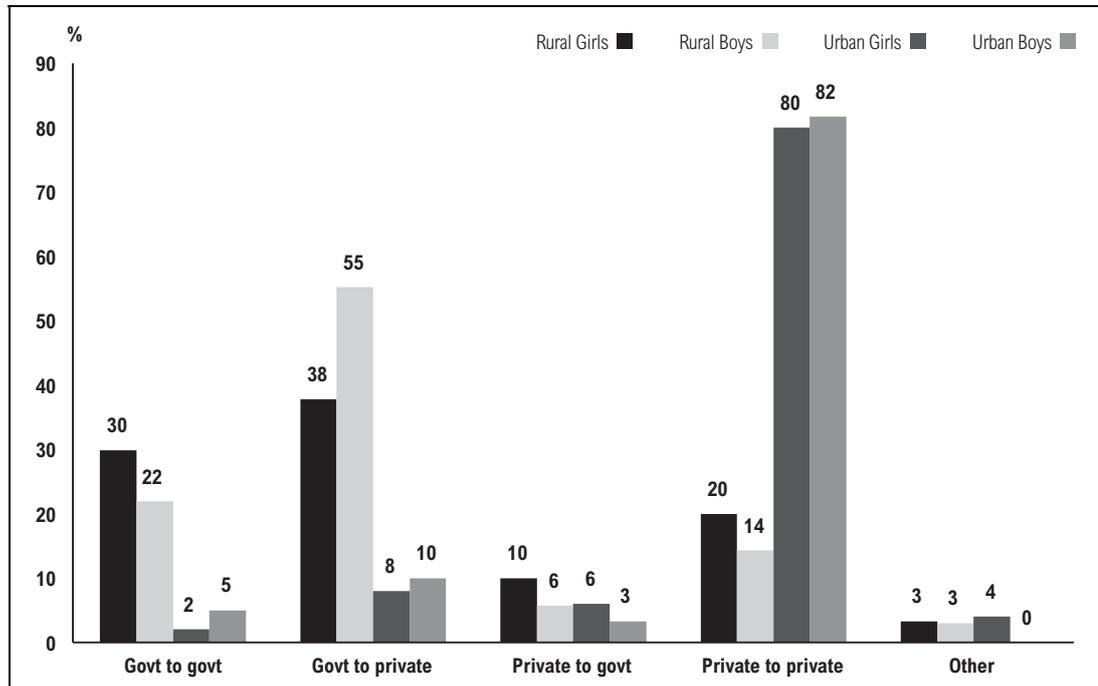
5. Findings from the school survey: type of school attended and extent of school mobility

The dynamic nature of the school system in Andhra Pradesh presents many opportunities and challenges for families with school-age children. Many parents make conscious choices to move their children between schools in search of better-quality education while for others the move becomes inevitable due to school-, home- or community-related factors. In almost all cases of school change the associated processes indicate a predominant role of parents in school choice. However, for parents, selecting a school was not a simple, straightforward decision to move children from home to pre-school and then to the primary school. It had been a complex situation, even at primary school level, of choosing from the many options available and deciding on priorities, while taking multiple factors into consideration. The children who change primary school are the focus of this paper. Taking advantage of the longitudinal nature of Young Lives research, we looked at trends in changing schools by comparing the Older and Younger Cohort children at the age of 8. The findings indicate an increase to 16 per cent in school moves among the Younger Cohort (aged 8 in 2009) compared to 5 per cent of the Older Cohort, who were the same age in 2002 (James and Woodhead 2014).

In India the first round of the school survey was conducted between December 2010 and March 2011. It revealed that 18 per cent of the sample of 950 children had moved schools since Round 3 of the household survey conducted in late 2009 (James and Woodhead 2014). This rate of movement is perhaps quite surprising, since the school survey sample consists entirely of children registered as being in Grade 5 or below, with the majority studying in Grade 2 or 3. Furthermore, school history data from Round 3 reveals that for some of these children, it is not the first time they have changed schools.

Looking at the school survey data (see Figure 1) it has been found that children had very different school trajectories as they moved between schools, either within the same sector (e.g. from one government school to another) or to a different sector, and sometimes back and forth between the two sectors, all from nursery until Grade 5 during the early grades up to the primary level. Figure 1 shows the details of children who had moved schools (n=289) from the entire sample included in the school study of Young Lives. It also shows the distribution by rural/urban location and gender.

Figure 1. *Children moving from government to private schools and vice versa, by gender and urban/rural location*



Source: Young Lives household data 2009

In terms of the direction of the school mobility, the data record different trends for the urban and rural children, with more children from the urban site (80 per cent of girls and 82 per cent of boys) moving between private schools while among the rural children the largest number of school changes reported was from the government to the private sector, including 38 per cent of the girls and 55 per cent of the boys. It is clear from the data that more boys in rural areas moved to private schools than girls. The next largest move among the rural children was from government to government schools. Among the urban children all other movements had negligibly low numbers, with the second largest move being from government to private schools. Caregivers attach great importance to their children's education while planning for their future. As Supraja's caregiver from Sagar (interviewed as part of the qualitative sub-study) says:

“People are not worried about their economic background or financial position... They are prepared to give up anything for the sake of their children's education. They want to give their children whatever they missed in their childhood and they want their children to attain that position which they failed to get.”

Interviews with the caregivers in the longitudinal qualitative research suggest that they consider it important to lay a good foundation for their children's education, and therefore the stage up to the end of primary school is when all experimentation is to be done. The caregivers are of the opinion that children should not be disturbed by moving schools once they enter secondary school, and all changes, except those inevitable, should be completed by the end of primary school. This could possibly explain the large number of school moves noted among the Younger Cohort children.

In the three sites of the school survey it was found that 19 per cent of the children (N=289) had moved schools within the last year, with 40 per cent of them moving between private schools and the largest proportion of these being reported from the urban site (80 per cent). Thirty per cent moved from private to government schools and 24 per cent from government to government schools, the prevalence in both the cases being dominant in the two rural sites and almost absent in the urban (Table 3).

Table 3. *School movement*

	Rural 1	Rural 2	Urban	Total
Private to government	9	4	3	16
Private to private	4	6	12	22
Government to private	2	1	-	3
Government to government	3	10	-	13
Total	18	21	15	54
Number of observations	95	97	97	289

Source: Young Lives school survey, Andhra Pradesh (2010)

As Table 3 shows, a total of 54 children had changed school from the three sites featured in the study.

6. Factors related to school change and children's experiences of school change

The focus of this section is to narrate these experiences using case studies in each of the identified areas to bring in children's perceptions while also relating to the factors that formed the basis for parental decisions on school change. It is argued that the child's adjustment to the new school and their other experiences are related to the factors that cause the move, whether structural, strategic, reactive or community-based. It is therefore important to focus on the factors causing change, as well as the location and the direction of change, while describing the experiences of children. It may be recalled that in the literature reviewed Section 3, children's views about changing school were rarely sought. Such narratives can help provide an in-depth understanding of the children's perceptions of school change and would facilitate the development of plans for schools to receive such children and facilitate school preparedness a smooth transition in school changes. This paper hopes to contribute to the literature here.

6.1 Conceptual framework

In narrating the children's experiences of school change, we use an adapted model of the framework provided by Burkham et al. (2009) and Rumberger et al. (1999), which provide for the inclusion of factors causing school change, as a basis of analysis. The factors that explain the school change in this framework are also found in the present research and the framework has been adapted to discuss the findings by including a new set of factors at the

community level. The first set of factors are those related to the different structural aspects of the school system including non-availability of the next grade and closing down of a particular school. In our research, a small number of the children had reported that the school move was related to moving on to the next grade, a shift that they necessarily had to make while moving from primary school (Grades 1 to 5) to upper primary school (Grades 6 to 7) or high school (Grades 8 to 10). These respondents have not been included for narrating the children's experiences as this is a known and planned move that children were aware of.

The second set of factors that Burkham et al. (2009) suggest as being equally important are those related to the family. As Burkham et al. suggest:

One family reason for school change is what Rumberger and his colleagues (1999) have called 'strategic' school change. This type of school change is characterised as purposeful, planned changes 'made to achieve some desired end', which is often to attend a better school. In contrast, these authors have identified another set of family-related reasons for changing schools, which they call 'reactive'. Reactive school changes happen when negative events, beyond the control of the student or family, occur that necessitate a school change. Reactive changes may occur when conditions at the school are unacceptable academically or socially, causing the family to feel that they have no choice but to remove the child from the situation.

School changes also may occur as a result of residential mobility due to a change in the family's situation; this could include positive changes, such as a better job, a better residence or moving to be near family (Crowley 2003) or disruption within the family, such as divorce, job loss, economic downturn or death in the family (Crowley 2003; Rumberger et al. 1999) (Burkham et al 2009: 2-3).

For 67 (7 per cent) of the Older Cohort children and 230 (12 per cent) of the Younger Cohort children in the Young Lives sample, school changes resulted from household residential moves although some of these moves might have been partly motivated by the prospect of better schooling (James and Woodhead 2014).

Our study suggests that a fourth set of factors needs to be introduced into the framework, and this relates to the community level. This would explain the collective behaviour of people from a community or a particular school, when a decision in favour of a change is caused by the need to be with the community and share resources/costs (of travel, for example) or be with particular teachers or friends.

6.2 Case studies

This section presents the factors that have shaped the children's educational trajectories using case studies. It draws on data from the interviews with 22 children from the three sub-study communities and their caregivers. While a few case studies (eight) have been dealt with in detail in the relevant sections, examples from other cases have been used to strengthen the argument and to show that other children have similar experiences. Similar experiences generally come from children within the same community, which has facilitated the process of identifying community-related factors that cause school change. Although certain case studies are discussed under a particular category, they are not necessarily related to a single factor; in many cases, it is more than one factor that caused the school change. The children's experiences, therefore, relate to the type of school change. Table 4 provides details of the basic characteristics of the case study children and Table A1 (in the appendix) provides details of their school moves.

Table 4. *Basic characteristics of case study children*

Pseudonym	Gender	Social group
Supraja, Mehraj, Lokeswari, Jagati, Kusuma Priya, Katrina	F	Other Caste/Forward
Sharuk Khan, Mahesh Babu, Madan, Ameer Khan	M	
Babitha	F	Backward Caste
Basha, Shankar	M	
Kundana Sri, Bhuvana	F	Scheduled Caste
Charan, Anand, Ramesh	M	
Kavyasri, Kumari, Shruthi	F	Scheduled Tribe
Balasubramanyam	M	

6.3 Strategic: school-related factors

Unsatisfactory school characteristics very often influence parents' decisions to move their children to a different school. These types of strategic move are more often made within the same sector, i.e. either between private schools or between government schools. As mentioned earlier, the movement within the private sector was more prevalent in the urban site while movement between government schools was seen more often in the rural sites. These school moves are explained through the use of case studies of children moving from private to private schools and government to government schools, thereby bringing into focus the varying factors that influence parental decisions and the experiences of children, which are also very different.

Case study: Mehraj

Mehraj, a Muslim girl from the urban site, Sagar, was in Grade 4 in 2011, and by then had changed school five times, always attending private schools. Mehraj initially attended an Urdu-medium private school, along with her older brother, in line with the community norm, according to which all children from Muslim households were encouraged to learn Urdu. Mehraj's parents expected that their daughter would also be taught English as a subject. Disappointed that this did not happen, they moved Mehraj to another private school after she had completed two years of schooling covering the lower and the upper kindergarten. Mehraj was able to walk to the new school with her older brother, as the school was not far away from home, this being one of the important factors influencing the caregivers' decision. Of the two schools, Mehraj liked the Urdu-medium school because, "here [in the second private school] there are no minimum facilities for children like drinking water, toilets..., etc." and she used to bring water from home. It was not too long before Mehraj was moved again, to a third private school, where she repeated the upper kindergarten and continued until she had completed Grades 1 and 2. Though the parental decisions until now had been strategic and community based, with the parents wanting to find better educational opportunities for their child or safer, more convenient ways of getting to school, this was not the case when the structural factor of the third private school closing pushed Mehraj back to the second private school for Grade 3. Mehraj was not happy with the teaching in either of the schools as "they were simply writing on the blackboard and going away but they were not teaching anything about the lesson". Soon Mehraj's parents moved her to a new private school and then again to another private school, where the child was at the time of our research, in Grade 4.

Case study: Lokeswari

Rumberger et al. (1999) view reactive factors as being negative, but examples from our study suggest that they can also be positive, as in the case of Lokeswari, a rural Younger Cohort girl aged 10, who had been offered a double promotion from Grade 1 to Grade 3 in her new school when she moved school for the third time, and for Babitha, who found the quality of teaching in private school to be better because “every period had a separate teacher; all subjects they use[d] to teach nicely”. Few attractive incentives from a school can also therefore cause a reaction by parents in favour of a new school, while there is nothing necessarily wrong/negative in the old school.

Lokeswari, from the rural site Kalahandi, was first enrolled in an English-medium private school located in the nearby town, where she completed lower kindergarten and upper kindergarten. Her parents then moved her to another private school, as the first school moved to another place, which required Lokeswari to travel about 10km, with the mother needing to get Lokeswari and her afternoon meal ready very early in the morning. This, Lokeswari’s mother said, was difficult in a farming family, owing to the daily domestic chores as well as those related to the home dairy (cleaning, milking, etc.). Furthermore, her parents also thought that their daughter would get tired travelling long distances each day, as a result of which she would not be able to concentrate on her studies. Her parents were keen on providing a better-quality education for the child and therefore they moved Lokeswari to a third school, a private residential school that provided hostel facilities, where she was enrolled into Grade 3 (she had been in Grade 1 in the previous school). The parents were excited about the double promotion, but this meant that Lokeswari had to stay in the hostel, which was 10km from home. No one ever talked to Lokeswari to prepare her for the big move away from home. All she was told was that she would get a good education and she could study well. Lokeswari completed Grades 3 and 4 in the residential school, where she continued to be at the time of our research.

In response to a question as to which school she liked the most and where her performance was good, Lokeswari responded by saying, “In this school also I am studying well. In that school also I was studying well. But, here in this school [the third private school] we have study hours; we can study for more time.” However, Lokeswari felt “very sad because there is no one here” for the first few days in the residential school. When asked if she wanted to go back to the village, she said, “Every week they [her parents] come and meet me” and this helped her to gradually settle down. Further, Lokeswari found it difficult being without her mother in the night, as she always slept next to her mother at home.

Interviewer: When are you feeling worried, is it in the day or is it in the night?

Lokeswari: In the night.

Interviewer: Why are you worried?

Lokeswari: I use[d] to sleep next to my mother every day when I was in the house.

Interviewer: What about here?

Lokeswari: Here I don’t sleep next to anyone.

Interviewer: Who will be there next to you, do you sleep on the floor or do you have beds?

Lokeswari: We sleep on the floor.

Interviewer: Who sleeps next to you, dear?

Lokeswari: Me and my younger sister, and 10th class children will sleep.

Lokeswari's hostel is a dormitory where all the children sleep in a row on the floor. At home, Lokeswari always slept next to her mother and she seemed to be missing this experience while in the hostel. The houses of families such as Lokeswari's are either one- or two-roomed and have limited space. A separate room for children is almost impossible and young children often sleep with their parents. Under such circumstances the school move meant that her nights at the hostel were different from her nights at home and she managed to adjust to this on her own in a few days. Finally she also decided to stay on because her parents thought that she would not study well if she was at home. Can this be looked at as one of the ways adopted by the parents to prepare her for the new school? Lokeswari experienced another new situation arising from the school move that she found a little difficult to manage. Her little sister was at the same residential school as her and Lokeswari had to take care of her sister as she was younger than her. She felt troubled because "every time she keeps bothering me. I told my mother. I told her that she pesters me every day." Because of this "to study I face problem. Sometimes she insists to sit next to me, then I go tell the teacher, then they will make her sit in upper kindergarten." When asked as to how she felt about being promoted from Grade 3 to Grade 4, she said, "I don't feel it is difficult."

Case study: Jagati

Jagati is a 10-year-old girl from urban Sagar and was in Grade 5 in 2011. She had changed schools five times by the time she reached Grade 5, and there was a different reason for each move, the main consideration being better quality of education. Unsatisfactory infrastructure and facilities, poor quality of school/teaching, unhygienic conditions, no progress, no qualified teachers, lack of individual attention, long distances, and no transportation provided are the factors reported by the parents. Each time, the new school was recommended by a person they knew or a relative, except in the case of the last school, which was recommended by Jagati's father's friend, whose children also attended this school, as did some of the neighbours' children.

At this final school, the parents found good-quality education, better academic progress, good standards, qualified teachers and teachers who took good care of the children and therefore they decided to continue Jagati's schooling there without any further change, as she would soon move to the secondary school, and further change could affect her performance. Jagati's school history shows that she attended a private English-medium school for nursery, lower kindergarten and upper kindergarten and then moved to another private English-medium school for Grades 1 and 2. The main reasons for the move, as explained by the mother, were poorly qualified teachers, the theft of an anklet, high fees for travel by rickshaw, poor infrastructure and facilities, poor quality of school/teaching, unhygienic conditions, no academic progress, no qualified teachers and lack of individual attention. Jagati was then moved to a third private school for Grade 3; it was recommended by others as providing good education. But owing to long distances and no transport she was again moved though good education was provided in this school. Jagati pursued Grade 4 in a fourth school, based on a relative's suggestion that there would be more individual attention paid to the child. However, as there were no qualified teachers with a B. E. Jagati complained that the school was not good, and there was also frequent change in the school management. Jagati was then moved to a fifth private school for Grade 5. She passed the entrance examination set by this newly opened school. Views on the present school suggested that performance-wise Jagati was good, the school standards were good, there were qualified teachers and these teachers are taking good care of the children. The parents are planning to keep Jagati at the same school until she completes her Grade 10.

Jagati's parents and many others who move children from one private school to another seem to be looking, in a single school, for many characteristics that they wish to have, and prefer to keep moving the child until they find at least a few of these together in one school. It is only in a few cases that the child has a say and very often it is the parents who make the decision for the child. What were Jagati's experiences of the change? What did she say about it?

Jagati was not too happy with the school changes, except for the first time when she "did not feel anything".

Interviewer: How did you feel when you came to [name of second school]?

Jagati: I didn't feel anything.

With the subsequent moves she thought that her "studies will be disturbed". She therefore asked, "Why do you move me to so many schools?" and her parents said "From now on we won't change your school; you will continue in the same school." Jagati was able to say how she felt and her parents, she said, responded positively: "My dad... he said 'I will let you study here only in [fifth private school] and I won't shift you'... he said from 6th class he will keep me in hostel."

Jagati considers the fifth school the best of all the ones she had attended so far because "they teach better".

Parents preferring to enrol their children in private schools often talked of the poor-quality teaching in the government schools. One parent expressed a common sentiment by saying: "We must give English-medium education to our children because only that can give them better job opportunities in later course." Another parent said:

"I saw that the teachers in the government schools arrive very late and most of the time not taking classes... They don't bother even if a child is absent for a number of days. In private school, where my two children are now studying, the teachers are on time to class, and if any child is absent for a day they will enquire with parents... such concern is important for us."

Kavyasri's caregiver is of the opinion that:

"For private schools, we pay money, we can question them if children come home early or if they don't study well. If they don't teach properly, we won't send the children to their school, but in government schools the teachers come and teach for the sake of their salaries, so they just come and go daily. We are small people. They are government teachers."

Supraja's caregiver, on the other hand, mentioned another important issue that forms the basis for parental decisions in favour of private schools, which is a big increase in the number of schools to choose from: "In those days there was only one [private] school for the entire town. Now there are more than ten schools in the same area". As a result:

"Very few people sent their children to private schools. Even children like Supraja also did not go to such schools, but nowadays all of them prefer to send their children to these private schools and they do not want their children to go to government schools."

The net result of this process is the increased use of private schools by poor parents even in remote communities. Singh and Sarkar (2012), in a study on teaching quality using Young Lives data for Andhra Pradesh, reported that among the parents who sent their children to

private schools, 63 per cent gave their reason as good-quality teaching, and 22 per cent chose the private school because it was near their home.

In this context mention may be made of Muralidharan and Kremer's (2009) survey of private schools in 20 Indian states, which has highlighted that the quality of teaching is generally higher in private schools than in government schools because of better attendance by teachers and greater teacher activity (e.g. more effective teaching, more correction of children's books, and more interaction with children). It has also been said that as low-cost schools provide free places to those who cannot afford to pay the fees, and are conveniently located within poor settlements and hence are more easily accessible especially to girls, they score on equity considerations as well (Nambissan and Ball 2011: 177).

6. 4. Reactive: school-related factors

Movement from one private school to another was in almost all cases supported by the parents' and child's expectations of better quality in the new school after finding the existing one not to live up to their expectations. However, there are also other factors that influence parental decisions in favour of a change and these depend to a large extent on the direction of the move. We now look at case studies of children whose move from one government school to another was more reactive to the school and hostel situations reflecting a lack of basic amenities, poor-quality food and unhygienic environment, causing health problems and sometimes hospitalisation.

Case study: Kumari

Kumari, a Scheduled Tribe girl from Perambalur, attended three government schools, including an anganwadi (pre-school), before she reached Grade 4 at the government residential school at a neighbouring town 6 km away. On completing the two years at the anganwadi, she moved to a government primary school in the village where she lived, and there she completed Grades 1 and 2. Kumari liked this school very much and developed an interest in learning. She attended the school along with other children from the same community, including a cousin. Kumari said: "My sister used to take me... sister in the sense, not own sister... sister from the neighbouring house... daily she used to take care and used to take[me] to school." For Kumari the school was also closer to home and within her community and the teaching was good.

For Grade 3 she was moved to a government residential school in a nearby town, about 30km from her home, along with ten other children from the same village. Kumari reports that the decision to send her to this school was based on the collective decision of the parents in the village to send the children to a far-away government residential school because "[we] won't study if we stay here... children don't come [to school] during first and second lessons... they just run away... due to that we were admitted at a far-away place." However, "all the children ran away from that place" because "the water there was not suitable, there is no proper water facility and children got health problems [fever, cold, etc.]. All the children were admitted to the hospital including me. That water is not suitable to us."

Interviewer: Why was the water not good?

Kumari: ... that bore pump gave [electric] shock one day... since then water is not good... we came back as we suffered from fever.

The school also did not provide play facilities for the children, which they did not like. Kumari explained that they all left school because

“We were kept sitting in the classroom and they [the teachers] roam outside ... Our teachers... they leave [do not attend] the 3rd class [Grade 3] ... they teach only 5th class [Grade 5]...”

The school was located 30km from the village and the children missed home and life in their community. For example, the school food was adulterated with cheaper ingredients to make it go further. “The food served there is not good... they have added something to the *upma* [breakfast porridge]... *ganji* [gruel] is added to the *pulusu* [curry]... due to these things we came back,” reported Kumari. Reacting to these school-level factors, they all left the school and returned to the village on their own and refused to go back. Kumari’s parents moved her to the government residential school at neighbouring town 6km away. When Kumari was first moved to the government residential school the more distant town (30 km away), she resisted:

“I told my father that I will study in one school and one hostel... but my father told me, ‘You won’t study, if you remain here’... so, I was kept there ... when it is not good there, I came back here.”

However, Kumari’s father died, apparently in a family conflict, and her mother and maternal grandfather, who were the caregivers, were afraid that some harm might come to Kumari if she stayed in the hostel. She returned home each day after the evening meal to be with the family. Kumari was asked why she continued at the hostel in spite of so many difficulties, and she said, “How can I [stay at home]... food is not sufficient to themselves... if I am here, they will scold... my aunt scolds me... that’s why I go and eat in the hostel and come back.”

While expressing her views about a good school, Kumari said, “Teaching should be good, playing has to be encouraged, good food has to be served... good education must be there...”; she finds this in the new school and decided to continue there until she finishes her schooling.

Young Lives data and other research (Kingdon 2005) have shown that it’s the children from poor and the poorest families that attend the government schools. Balasubramanyam’s mother said: “We want to educate my son in government school only because we are not able to pay that much of money to educate in private schools.” It is therefore poverty that keeps the children in the government schools. School change within the government sector has been mainly structural, i.e. due to lack of availability of secondary schools or upper primary schools in the area, meaning that children were required to change schools because a school did not service the next grade. However, children also moved between government day schools and government residential schools. The choice of a government residential school for children as young as 8 or 9 years is influenced by two key factors: one, the financial situation of the household, which does not allow parents to provide for all school requirements, whereas in residential schools all these, including board and lodging are provided free by the government. The second reason is the environment at residential schools, which is conducive to learning, the same situation not being available at home since children are involved in household chores and the family occupation, including farm work. As a result: “they do not get enough time to study while at home and face number of distractions. The focus on the studies is lost and they cannot perform well.” Further, since most of the caregivers are either illiterate or had few years of schooling there is no support and monitoring at home. Parents look for this support in the residential schools.

Balasubramanyam, another Scheduled Tribe child from the rural site Perambalur, and Charan and Kundana Sri, two Scheduled Caste children from the rural site Kalahandi, and many others were enrolled into residential schools for the same reasons as Kumari, but some did not stay very long before they moved to a day school because, the hostel facilities were poor, and the poor quality food and water made children ill. One child who had moved school said: “I was uncomfortable because I came from Telugu-medium to English-medium. I found English a bit hard.” Another child said that they returned from school as a group because “we found small insects in rice and curries – once we got a big worm in an aubergine curry.”

6.4.1. *Corporal punishment*

An important reactive school-related factor that causes school mobility irrespective of the type of school is the corporal punishment reported by children both from government and private schools. Kusuma Priya could not bear the corporal punishment in one school, the second of the three private schools she had attended between lower kindergarten and Grade 3. Kusuma Priya comes from a Forward Caste family and lived in the rural site Kalahandi. Like many men from that area, Kusuma Priya’s father had gone to Kuwait for employment and her mother transferred the responsibility for Kusuma Priya’s education to her uncle and aunt, who are educated, while she is illiterate. Kusuma attended the private school along with her cousins and insisted on leaving the school when she was beaten by the teacher for not doing well in her studies. As a result she and her cousins were all moved to another private school. Kusuma said that the: “teaching was not good [at her first school] and the children were being beaten in the earlier [second] school. At the same time the new school came up so they decided to put me there.”

Sharuk Khan and Katrina from Sagar; Mahesh Babu and Madan from Kalahandi; and Shruthi from Perambalur had similar experiences to Kusuma Priya with corporal punishment, which also caused their parents to move them to a different school.

6.4.2. *Poor-quality schooling*

According to UNICEF (2000), good quality education should be defined broadly and should include healthy learners supported by their family and community, a safe environment, learning content that is reflected in the relevant curricula, child-centred teaching approaches and outcomes that encompass the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes and that are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society. Based on an analysis of the Young Lives qualitative longitudinal data, Morrow and Wilson (2014) report that quality is a central consideration for parents when choosing schools, but how parents define quality differs greatly – some may rely on relatives’ opinions, a few mentioned their children’s preferences, some mentioned the importance of being able to call teachers to account, others talked about assessing school quality by the marks their children received, and some (educated) parents may assess a child’s reading abilities independently. This therefore suggests that defining quality in schooling/education is not straightforward and there is much research, mostly focused on pupil achievements/outcomes, and inputs/teachers, infrastructure, books and curricula.

Positive learning outcomes are influenced significantly by the physical, psychosocial and service delivery elements of schooling (UNICEF 2000). Physical elements include the quality of the school facilities. Psychosocial elements include the environment (especially a peaceful environment for girls, devoid of discrimination, harassment and subtle assaults on their

confidence, self-esteem and identity), teachers' behaviour, school disciplining practices and inclusiveness.

Hence, high-quality physical, psychosocial and service delivery elements in schools set the stage for learning to occur. Bandyopadhyay (2012), in a study on gender and school participation in the states of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, points out the urgent need to pay adequate attention to the improvement of infrastructure and academic facilities that can facilitate access, retention and participation of students, especially girls. Providing female teachers and girls' toilets are essential for this purpose. It is necessary to improve the quality of education and the teaching-learning process in all the schools to ensure meaningful access for all children and their full participation. Good-quality education, as described in respondents' own words, and the provision of basic facilities often formed the basis for parental decisions in favour of school change, as is evident from the case studies presented in the above sections. What needs to be answered is whether these school moves actually provided the quality that caregivers were looking for.

6.5. Reactive: household factors

It is equally important to consider reasons for school change that are related to the family and that influence decision-making about which school to choose from within the government sector. Unless these get addressed, the movement between schools will go on. In this context, it is also apt to cite Desai et al. (2008), who suggest a need for deeper reflection, on two pertinent issues: (1) parental choices often propel children from certain backgrounds into certain types of schools (Hanushek 1997); and (2) it is important to empirically examine the impact of private school enrolment on educational outcomes especially of the socially disadvantaged children. This is particularly true in cases such as Mehraj, Lokeswari and Jagati, where parents keep moving schools in the hope of providing better education.

Several household-level factors beyond the control of the family are seen to influence parental decisions and cause the school move. This was more prevalent in the move from government to private school and private to government. Children's experiences here are very varied when compared to the other factors discussed earlier in this paper.

6.5.1. Distance to school: transport-related issues

Burgess et al.'s (2010) study in the UK on parental school preferences and school choice revealed that the three main factors families cared about were academic attainment, school socio-economic composition and travel distance. Seraj et al. (2011) in the USA have pointed out that distance to school and the travel mode was a complex issue that was governed by various factors such as parents' perceptions of the physical and social environment, safety concerns, convenience, parental attitudes and opinions, and residential location (see also Faulkner et al. 2010; Timperio et al. 2004; McMillan 2007; and McDonald 2008). Timperio et al. (2004) further note that the age of the child and household socio-economic status influence parental attitudes towards and perceptions of the mode of travel and distance to school and also play a key role in the selection of a school.

Lokeswari's parents had moved her to a second private school as her current school had moved to another place, and this required her to travel a distance of 10km. Her parents were also of the opinion that their child got tired travelling long distances each day, as a result of which she would not be able to concentrate on her studies.

Case study: Charan

Charan, a boy from the rural site Kalahandi was first enrolled in a government school, where he did Grades 1 to 5. His father had made arrangements for him to stay at his uncle's place as Charan was too young to commute by bus and his home was far away from the school. On completion of Grade 5, Charan was enrolled into an upper primary government school and had to again stay at a relative's house, which he did not like.

"First day when I went to the school I didn't like it, madam. When I returned home and told my father about how I felt at school, he said if I go to school for some days I will get used to it. I didn't want to stay there. I didn't want to stay away from home, madam."

When asked if he missed home, Charan said:

"If I am with my mother and father, I would be happy. That's why I silently cried. I used to go from my uncle's home. I went to that school for a month while staying at my uncle's home and after that I felt that I must not stay at someone else's home for such a period. So I continued to go by bus."

To a query about why he felt like that, Charan said:

"At my uncle's home, after I come back from the school and do my homework I don't find anyone to play with me and the children at that place are not familiar to me. I can't stay there as I stay at our home. That's why I didn't like to stay there, madam."

He was then moved to another government school, which he reached by bus: "I have travelled for 11 months in bus, madam; I didn't feel any difficulty."

6.5.2. *Financial problems*

Basha and Bhuvana from Kalahandi, Anand and Ramesh from Perambalur, and Ameer Khan and Katrina from Sagar were all initially admitted to the private school. All these children liked their previous school where the teaching was good and they were all performing well.

Case study: Katrina

Katrina's mother sent both her son and her second daughter, Katrina, to private school. However, she soon had to move them, owing to financial problems:

"We were not able to purchase books and other things. Rs.150 [the monthly fee]... our conditions did not allow us to pay even that Rs.150, [so] we shifted and [enrolled] here [the government school]."

Katrina's school history indicates that she attended the government anganwadi for the pre-school and then moved to a private school to attend the lower kindergarten. Katrina's family was not in a position to pay the fee in the private school and so was shifted to the KKVM government school, where she completed her Grade 5, and then moved to a government school that was established under a scheme that promotes high school education among girls.

Among the three schools that Katrina attended, she liked the private school the most because:

"They let us play. Here in KKVM [the first government school] also the teachers let us play... but when I left the [private] school I felt sad. I got scared when I joined here [the government school]. I thought the teacher [would] beat us and I got scared. It took some time to adjust to this school."

Case study: Ramesh

Ramesh was initially admitted into a private English-medium school, where he attended nursery, lower kindergarten, upper kindergarten and Grade 1. Due to financial problems at home, he was then moved to a private Montessori school, which cost a little less than his previous school. A series of health problems at home – his mother having an operation, both the children suffering from jaundice, and his father becoming an alcoholic – all resulted in the family falling into severe debt. Further loss was incurred due to the failure of a bore well, the drilling of which was undertaken to provide irrigation to their farm. Unable to clear the debts and bear the pressure from the lenders, the family sold part of their farmland and migrated to Hyderabad in search of work. Ramesh followed them after a couple of months and was enrolled in a government school. Finding it too difficult to manage at the new place, the family moved back to the native place, Perambalur, a village where they had lived earlier, and enrolled Ramesh in a government residential school where he was at the time of our research. “They teach nicely there,” said Ramesh, talking of the private school that he had attended.

Describing his experiences of being in different schools, Ramesh said:

“I was there for a month [in the second private school]. My parents did not pay the fee, that time I was the leader.⁶ If we can't pay the fee they told me not to come. I was learning English nicely, I knew English nicely there.”

When the family migrated to Hyderabad in search of work, “there the debts increased, in Balaji Nagar, we paid them but my father's drinking habit became worse so we went back to our village.” Earlier Ramesh went to his residential school by the school bus, but now he has returned to the village, “me and my younger sister walk to school.”

Case study: Ameer Khan

Ameer Khan completed his lower kindergarten, upper kindergarten and the first three grades at a private school. The education there was good and in English medium. For the fourth grade he was moved to the local government school because his family's poor financial status meant that they were not able to pay school fees. Ameer Khan's father died and the situation at home became more difficult. In future, the mother said she wanted to educate her son in a government school only because they didn't have the money to send him to a private school.

Ameer Khan found the new school to be difficult as it was a Telugu-medium school, while his mother tongue was Urdu and his three years of earlier schooling were in English. However, he said that he did not mind the change of school because in the previous school: “they use[d] to beat me. They hit me with the stick.”

Most children who moved from private to government schools were almost pushed into the situation which they disliked the most. The parental decision was in response to disruption and adverse events within the family, such as economic downturns and death. The children in most circumstances did not like the move but, they would understand. As Katrina's mother reported:

“She did not say anything. Conditions of the household were known to her; ... she was very young then... she was saying nothing... she used to understand when told that we would make arrangements later. She never asked... she wouldn't say [that she would like to go to a better school].”

6 One of the active students is nominated by the class teacher to be the class leader, meaning a representative of the class.

6.5.3. *Health problems*

For poor people, good health is a crucial economic asset because their livelihoods depend on it. It is a well-known fact that poor health is closely associated with poverty (see for example Mehta et al. 2011; Antony and Laxmaiah 2008). When a poor or socially vulnerable person becomes ill or injured, the entire household can become trapped in a downward spiral of lost income and high healthcare costs. The cascading effects may include time being diverted from generating an income or to care for the sick; and sometimes they may also force the sale of assets required for livelihoods. Poor people are more vulnerable to this downward spiral as they are more prone to disease and have more limited access to healthcare and social insurance.

Considering the connection between poverty and health (Lawson 2004), with ill health leading to impoverishment, household asset depletion, and income loss that cause consumption levels to fall below minimum needs (Russell 2004), enables us to gain some insights into children's school change trajectories.

6.5.4. *Death of a family member*

The loss of a family member is a traumatic event in a child's life and has been mentioned by children and touched on in the above section. It is harmful psychologically and in turn affects children's schooling and educational outcomes. The extent to which the further pathways develop depends largely on the age and gender of the child, the gender of the head of the household and the nature of his or her contribution to the household and the existing conditions of the family.

The plight of children who have lost parents has received considerable attention in the social literature (e.g. Copson 2002; Gertler et al. 2004; Cas et al. 2014; Himaz 2009). Himaz (2009) noted that losing a mother in middle childhood (between the ages of 7 and 12) had a significant negative impact on school enrolment and other educational outcomes, such as reading and writing, compared to the outcomes of children whose mothers had not died. Gertler et al. (2004) observed that a family member's death not only reduced the investments in the children's human capital but it could also have long-lasting implications for their quality of life and livelihood. These authors add that it is possible that most parental deaths are preceded by long periods of ill health. Such ill health can both reduce a family's ability to pay for the things they need and increase the value of a child's work at home caring for siblings and the ailing adult. Gertler et al. (2004), in their study on schooling and parental death, noted that a parent's recent death had a negative impact on school enrolment.

6. 6. **Multiple factors**

Case study: Mahesh Babu

In certain situations, as in the case of Mahesh Babu from Kalahandi, multiple factors at different ages cause the school changes and can put many demands on children. Mahesh Babu was initially enrolled in the local (government) anganwadi for pre-school. He was then sent to a private residential school, where he stayed in the hostel at such young age for nursery, lower kindergarten and upper kindergarten. He developed skin infection while staying there, and was therefore brought home, and later enrolled in an English-medium private school, for Grade 1. The school had arranged for a school van to fetch children from this community and 20 children from this village attended the school. The teaching was good, but soon the van became irregular and later never came, owing to which Mahesh missed

school, and his father did not like this. Along with 15 of the 20 children who attended the school, Mahesh was moved to a third private school, where he was in Grade 2. Mahesh's father felt that it was too much of a strain for his son to commute long distances every day, and so decided to bring him back to the first private school, i.e. the residential school, where he again had to stay in the hostel. The teaching was good, so never mind the skin infection that he developed earlier.

Sharing his experiences related to the transitions to the different schools and the hostel, Mahesh said, "I was enrolled in nursery at [the private residential] school, which was a small school." To a query as to how he managed at the hostel being so young, Mahesh said, "Prasad's brother was there; he was in 10th class. Then there was Shankar, and his younger sister. She is my cousin." Having members of his extended family in the same school helped Mahesh to be away from home and stay in the hostel at a young age, and also because his father "wanted me to study in the English-medium school; I also like English medium." At the time of the interview, Mahesh's younger sister and brother were in nursery and Grade 1 but were not with him at the hostel because "they are still small and they cannot stay", though he himself stayed in the hostel too when he was in lower kindergarten.

On his move back to the residential school for Grade 4 (he skipped Grade 3), Mahesh said that "going to school near home is better; it is good and nice at home; I can play cricket and can watch TV." When he grows up Mahesh would like to be a cricketer and likes "Yuvaraj [a member of the Indian cricket team] who is an all-rounder" though he himself is a bowler. Mahesh describes his typical day at the residential school:

"I get up at 5 in the morning. I have the study group till 6am. Then at 6 we go for our bath. That goes on till 7. Breakfast is at 7.30. Then we roam [move] around till 8am. Then we assemble at the class by 9 or 9.10. Then we break for lunch and then assemble at 1pm. Then we have classes till 4.15. After that we sit for study till 5pm. Then we sit down for our homework till 6pm then after 6 we just keep talking and roaming around till 7pm. At 7.30 they serve us dinner after which we sit again for study from 8pm till 9.30pm after which we go to sleep. ... I play cricket [at home] on Sundays. I play in the morning and in the afternoon; [in this school] we do have a playground but we don't have a bat and ball. They play *kabaddi* [a local game] in this school, but I don't play, only children play [i.e. he felt too old to play *kabaddi*]."

Having been to so many schools, Mahesh was asked which one he would choose if given a chance and he promptly said that it would be a local private school so that he can come to school from home and play a lot. He added: "In my village the school is only up to 5th class. Also, my father wouldn't allow me to study in the village. My father wanted me to study in an English-medium school so it would be that school". However since the father thinks that it is good for him to go to the private residential school, he would do so, but "will study only here until class ten; even if a bus is provided I will not change. My father also said I can stay here till class ten. If I change again, I will miss Abdul. Earlier, when I was young, I missed Abdul, but I did not know much at that time."

6.7. Summary

The above review of the children's experiences related to school change suggests that these depend to a large extent on the type of move and also the factors that caused the change. Shankar felt very happy when he moved from the local government school to a private school, because he "joined a new school. On joining here I made many friends with everyone within the first two days and that made me very happy. The teachers did not beat me and

clarified my doubts.” In some cases, private school teachers received the new children and facilitated their transition into the new environment, because some children talked of their experiences as being positive when they moved to a private school from a government school. In other cases, a strategic move made by parents in favour of a school better than the one that the child is leaving behind, it appears, facilitates a smooth transition for the child into the new school. In such cases the children have said that they did like the new school better than the one that they had left. Mahesh stayed in the hostel when at nursery but liked to attend school from home because then he could play cricket every day and watch TV. But his father suggested that the residential school was good for him. However, children also reported feeling sad and missing friends and home due to the change to the new school, but some of them have eventually managed to adapt to the new school environment, while some others moved to either another new school or back to the old school. Mahesh missed his friend Abdul but did not know much about it when he was young during the first move to the private school. But now that they are together back at the same school again he said that he would feel sad if he had to move again and leave Abdul. He decided not to move school again until he completes Grade 10 and received that assurance from his father. Jagati also liked the last new school that she attended, but then was tired of moving schools and asked her father not to change any more, and her father promised not to.

In circumstances where the school move is related to the reactive factors, children often found it more difficult to manage the change. On the school-related reactive factors, the negative experiences at the previous school made them sceptical of the new school and its environment, including the teacher receptivity and the basic amenities at school. They moved in and out of school in groups from the same community and here the location mattered a lot in the rural sites. The children who moved school because of home-based reactive factors accepted the school that was available to them given the situation and home and they just accepted the new school as the next best option without complaining. Katrina liked the earlier private school better, but then she understood and never asked to continue in that school.

7. Discussion

The various research studies discussed in the earlier sections suggest that very often, it is the school-related factors that have the most influence on the decision-making process, but the case studies discussed in the above section bring out clearly how family-related factors and those at the community level very often cause the children to change schools very frequently. The narratives also suggest that the children’s experiences and their adjustment to the new school environment often depended on where the child moved to and the factors that caused the change. Strategic and structural moves did not make it too difficult for the children, but the reactive ones seem to have been tough on them. In cases of school change, the burden of adjusting to the new school very often falls on the child, with little help or support from the teacher, school or parents. Any intervention aimed at helping children manage school change should therefore take into consideration not only the school-level factors but also the family- and community-level factors that cause the move. Government schools and the teachers need to be prepared to receive children into the later grades and facilitate a smooth transition. Location, i.e. urban/rural place of residence, emerges as a key factor influencing the direction of school mobility and thereby its impact. Many school transfers had nothing to do with changes in residence — they were about moves between private and public schools. As school choice has made more options available to families, more children are being shifted

around. In the urban areas it was the availability of more options and opportunities in the form of low-fee schools that resulted in parents moving children often in search of a school that fitted their requirements until they realised that it was not easy to fulfil all requirements at the same school. They settled for the next best option. However the issue that emerges from these types of experiences of school change is the need to assess if these moves actually provide something better and fulfil parents' and children's aspirations to a high-quality education. Mehraj reported that she found all the schools to be the same, though at a later point in her interview, she mentions liking a particular school in view of the availability of basic facilities, like drinking water. Lokeswari said she studied well in both the schools and Jagati was actually fed up with number of schools she had to change before she was promised a settlement for the final school she moved to.

The rural communities do not offer so much of a choice, but aspiring parents scouted around for a better school while others settled for the school that many other children in the community attended. Family economic status did make a lot of difference and poor households often decided in favour of a government school and a residential one if possible. Experiences of children who moved to government residential schools reveal the poor and inadequate facilities and poor-quality food, which drive children away and push parents to look for a better option. While on the one hand these government residential schools are chosen by households with low socio-economic status, in the hope of finding a better option for their children, the school and hostel conditions drive these children away from such schools. What then is the purpose of these schools and hostels when they do not cater to the minimum requirements of good-quality education as promised through various international conventions and laws?

In the children's movements within the government sector, food quality and basic infrastructure/facilities at the hostels and residential schools seem to emerge as important factors influencing decisions on school choice. It is poorer families who often make these choices, and in the absence of any improvement in the conditions, children from these households may slowly drop out of schools, because the child and its health are more important for the families than the schooling. These children are more likely to drop out of school also because they can neither afford the private schools nor can they continue in the government schools. Unless the Government initiates actions towards improving the quality of these residential schools, we may have more and more children dropping out of schools. The quality of life of these children is likely to be worse off than children who are fortunate enough to continue school, thereby promoting inequalities from childhood onwards.

Finally, corporal punishment emerged as a significant experience that children reported from all types of schools and turned out to be an important factor causing school mobility. Corporal punishment is prohibited by law in Andhra Pradesh, but we find children moving schools fearing the corporal punishment at school. The stringent enforcement of the law prohibiting corporal punishment is the need of the hour and the school administration has to direct its attention to this.

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Appendix

Table A1. *Details of case study children's school moves*

	Number of moves	Type of move	Main reasons
Supraja	3	Private–Private	Quality; Cannot question in Government schools; Large number of schools available to choose from
Mehraj	5	Private–Private	English-medium; Lack of basic amenities; Better education opportunity; School inadequacies
Lokeswari	3	Private–Private	Double promotion at new school; School shifted to new premises; Long distance; Better quality
Babitha	4	Government–Private–Government; Day to residential	Better quality of teaching
Jagati	5	Private–Private	Better quality; Improper infrastructure; Unhygienic conditions; Lack of individual attention; Long distance; Transportation fee
Kavyasri	4	Government–Private–Government; Day to residential	Quality; Private schools are accountable
Kumari	3	Government–Government; Day to residential	Community decision; No proper water facility; Health problems; Hospitalisation; Electric shock; Teachers not in class; Poor quality food (insects)
Balasubramanyam	3	Government–Government; Day–Residential–Day	Hostel not good; Poor facilities; Poor quality food (insects)
Charan	3	Government–Government	Stay at uncle's house (unhappy); Long distance
Kundana Sri	2	Government–Government; Day to Residential	Hostel not good; Poor facilities; Poor-quality food (insects)
KusumaPriya	3	Private–Private	Teaching not good; Corporal punishment
Sharuk Khan	2	Private –Private	Teaching not good; Corporal punishment
Katrina	3	Private–Government	Teaching not good; Corporal punishment
Mahesh Babu	4	Private–Private	Long distance; Transport problems; Skin infection; Poor-quality food; Corporal punishment
Madan	4	Private–Private; English–Telugu–English	Corporal punishment; Good quality
Shruthi	3	Private– Private	Corporal punishment; Good quality
Basha	2	Private–Government	Financial problems
Bhuvana	4	Government–Private–Government; Day to Residential	Financial problems
Anand	4	Private–Government	Financial problems
Ramesh	6	Private– Government; Day to Residential	Financial problems; Family health problems
Ameer Khan	2	Private–Government	Father's death; Financial problems; Corporal punishment
Shankar	3	Private–Private	Corporal punishment; Good quality

Changing Schools in Andhra Pradesh: The Experiences of Children and their Caregivers

Moving from one school to another is a significant event for children, marked by new experiences and challenges. Changing schools can be difficult in terms of the curriculum, language, physical facilities in the school, change of friendships and adjusting to new teachers. On the other hand, selecting a school in many cases is not about a single decision made by parents at point their child starts pre-school or primary. Instead, an increasing number of parents make multiple, successive choices, even during their children's earliest schooling. This paper describes children's experiences of school mobility and attempts to fill the gap in the research on changing schools and children's experiences in the Indian context. The paper makes use of three different sets of data from Young Lives: the longitudinal data from the main household and child-level research carried out in 2002, 2006–07 and 2009 (in order to develop school histories of the children); an extensive school survey conducted in 2010 (to study the quality and effectiveness of the education experienced by a sub-sample of Younger Cohort children, then aged 9–10), which uncovered that many children had changed school at least once by the age of 9; and a qualitative sub-study carried out in 2011 that looked into the processes of parental decision-making about schools, the factors that explained school mobility and the children's experiences of moving school. It is argued that that the children's experiences and their adjustment to the new school environment often depended on where the child moved to and the factors that caused the change. Strategic and structural moves did not make it too difficult for the children, but reactive moves seemed to be hard for them. In cases of school change, the burden of adjusting to the new school very often fell on the child, with little help or support from the teacher, school or parents. Any intervention aimed at helping children to manage school change should therefore take into consideration not only the school-level factors but also the family- and community-level factors that cause the move. Government schools and teachers need to be prepared to receive children into the later grades and facilitate a smooth transition.



About Young Lives

Young Lives is an international study of childhood poverty, involving 12,000 children in 4 countries over 15 years. It is led by a team in the Department of International Development at the University of Oxford in association with research and policy partners in the 4 study countries: Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam.

Through researching different aspects of children's lives, we seek to improve policies and programmes for children.

Young Lives Partners

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

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