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Young Lives Qualitative Research: Round 1 – India



Uma Vennam
Anuradha Komanduri

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Executive summary

Qualitative research is a major feature of the Young Lives project during Phase 3 funding (2006-9), drawing on a mix of complementary methods to understand the diverse experiences and aspirations of children from different geographical, socio-economic and cultural locations. This report presents an initial analysis of some of the qualitative data collected in four of the 20 Young Lives sites in Andhra Pradesh during October to November 2007 ('Qual-1').¹ The sub-sample was drawn from both cohorts of Young Lives children – the Younger Cohort (aged 6 to 7) and the Older Cohort (aged 12 to 13) – as well as their caregivers, teachers, health workers and community representatives.

The sub-sample includes 48 children, 12 from each of the sites, with equal numbers of boys and girls from each cohort. Further key variables for sub-sampling included caste, parental presence, school enrolment, pre-school attendance and type of school attended. These criteria were used to select a core group of 'case study' children, in addition to another eight children per community who could replace these children if they subsequently dropped out; the latter were also included in group-based research activities.

Three overriding questions guided the qualitative research:

1. What are the key transitions in children's lives, how are they experienced (particularly in relation to activities, relationships, identities and well-being) and what influences these experiences?
2. How is children's well-being understood and evaluated by children, caregivers and other stakeholders?
3. How do policies, programmes and services shape children's transitions and well-being?

Research into these questions aimed to be sensitive to both differences between children (for example, age, gender, socio-economic status, and ethnic, linguistic and religious identity), and inter-generational differences (for example, in the perspectives of children and their caregivers). The qualitative research used a mix of methods to generate data on these themes, including individual interviews with children (both cohorts), caregivers and other key stakeholders – e.g., pre-school, primary and high school teachers, health workers and the village head (*sarpanch*) – and group interviews with adults in the community. Creative methods using drawing, mapping and neighbourhood walks with children were also introduced. Semi-structured observations of homes, schools and community settings provided the context for analysing and understanding the data.

Childhood transitions

Most of the Older Cohort children had already entered secondary school. The majority were enrolled in government schools with a small number attending private institutions. However, four children were not attending school, and were either working within their households or were in waged labour. There was little gender variation within this group. Similarly, for those attending school, there was little gender variation in the type of school attended. Overall,

¹ Prof. Uma Vennam is Lead Qualitative Researcher and her Assistant Researchers are Dr. Anuradha Komanduri and Prof. Rajalakshmi PV. Dr K. Hymavathi, D. Udaya and N. Priya are research assistants.

more boys than girls had entered paid labour; girls were more likely to be engaged in unpaid work on family farms and in domestic activities.

Institutional transitions in terms of changes in schooling and education were important for both cohorts of children. School transitions impacted on their time-use, movement within and outside the community, their responsibilities at home and in other social spheres, and on their identities. School characteristics (e.g., government/private, location, medium of instruction) strongly shaped children's experiences of transition and the types of adjustment that they were expected to make.

The children participating in the qualitative research demonstrated six possible types of school pathway (see Annex 1). The most common pathway for both younger and older children was to progress from one government school to the next (be it from a pre-school to primary or from primary to secondary). Fewer older children attended private English medium schools compared to the Younger Cohort, indicating that secondary school private education may be less accessible to the poor in view of the increased costs involved. Private education was preferred over government education because English was the medium of instruction and the quality of instruction was believed to be better. Four child participants from the tribal areas were found to be boarding in government hostels provided by the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) and the Tribal Welfare Department, admission into which was highly sought after by both caregivers and children.

Affordability and access were described as key factors influencing school choice – a decision which was generally made by parents, although some older children (boys and girls) felt that they were consulted. In rural areas where access was limited, there was often little option but to attend the local government school, which was by default a Telugu-medium school. Distance from home to school and the mode of transportation were important factors in the continuation or discontinuation of schooling, especially for girls. Children and adults identified specific gendered risks that influenced decisions of whether to keep children in school. Examples included the kind of negative treatment received while travelling on public buses, delays due to transport that worried parents when children arrived home late and increased interaction between boys and girls at school.

Though poverty was a common feature of children's lives across the four research communities, their expectations and confidence in achieving them varied between the urban, rural and tribal communities. This could possibly be attributed to the availability of and access to services and opportunities, which undoubtedly were better in the urban and tribal areas (excluding the hill top villages, in view of the ITDA) than in the rural areas. Children, in general, were keen to pursue higher education and were able to express and reflect on their expectations. They realised that education was important for achieving their aspirations to become doctors, police officers, teachers or *anganwadi* (pre-school) workers. There were differences in boys' and girls' aspirations, however. In general, girls were more realistic in their aspirations, as many of them aspired to become teachers; they expected to be able to achieve their occupational goals, considering the opportunity structures available to them. Boys tended to have 'higher' aspirations, in that they wanted to become doctors and engineers, but these occupational goals were often not matched by local opportunities and resources; therefore, the gap between what they want (aspirations) and what they expect (expectations) may be wider than for girls.

When they discussed their daily activities and time-use as a group, most boys and girls ranked 'school' as the activity they most liked. Information generated from the group 'well-being exercise' was also revealing, in that children from all four research communities identified a good education/going to school as an important indicator of a child doing well in

life ('child well-being'). Children mentioned that they had to study hard in order to earn money, get a job and settle well in life. However, they felt that they needed the support of parents and government to facilitate the continuation of education beyond grade ten (at around 14 years old). The caregivers also emphasised the need for higher education, but for a different reason – to provide their children with a better life, in most cases one that was different from their own.

Children discussed their experiences of school transitions and reflected on differences between previous, present and 'ideal' schools. The dimensions of school quality that mattered most to them were in relation to school environments and relationships, quality of teaching, basic amenities, mode of reaching school, academic performance and recreational facilities. Observations were made that, in most cases, the schools lacked basic amenities like drinking water, toilets and playgrounds. Though most schools had buildings, classrooms in rural government schools were not considered well equipped. For example, children talked about having to sit on the floor for lack of chairs.

Nonetheless, various services provided at government schools motivated parents to send their children to school. These included the Midday Meal scheme, free books and uniforms, and bus passes for travel to schools outside the community. Children and caregivers discussed their experiences of these services. For example, children talked about the supply of free books, but complained that the books were not available on time at the beginning of the school term. Free bus passes were useful in facilitating girls' access to secondary school, but girls who used the pass found bus drivers were uncooperative, failed to stop the bus at times, and yelled at them for boarding with large school bags. They were subject to 'eve-teasing' (a local phrase used to describe bullying targeted at girls), had to use over-crowded buses, and often arrived late to school.

Institutional transitions were also linked to social transitions, especially for the older children (and especially girls), where reaching the stage of secondary education meant being considered 'grown up' by parents. Physical changes experienced by older children were also linked to increasing participation in housework, family farm work and paid labour. All of the older children were engaged in household/domestic activities that they considered to be 'routine' activities and not 'work', as these were unpaid activities for the family; girls performed more home-based unpaid work than boys.

Early childhood transitions experienced by the younger group of children were mainly in relation to changes in their care and educational environments. These included the transition to primary school either from pre-school or from home and either as a day student or as a boarding student at a hostel. Most of the younger children had already entered primary school; half of them attended the local government school, while most of the remaining children attended private school, either as a day student or in a hostel. Among the Younger Cohort, there were five different evident pathways to primary school. These are discussed in more detail in Vennam et al. (2008) (see also Annex 2).

Children's well-being

Information on older children's understandings and experiences of well-being was gathered through group-based activities and highlighted a range of physical, social, emotional and education-related indicators of what it means for a child in their community to be faring well in life.

Both boys and girls valued physical appearance as an indicator of child well-being, which was described in terms of wearing neat clothes, having regular baths and wearing jewellery

(in the case of girls). They also placed importance on strong social relationships, both within and outside their households. Mutual help, respect, sharing, and good behaviour and personal character were considered important characteristics of a child doing well in life.

Education was also central to children's understandings of well-being and was described in terms of a child who regularly attended school, studied well, shared school-related material with others and was respectful towards teachers. School featured as one of the major institutions in their lives. Most children linked well-being to access to good schools, with clean environments, good-quality facilities and trained teachers.

Well-being was also defined by economic/material indicators, such as having good food in the form of biscuits, vegetables, chocolates, etc., and possession of 'basic' necessities, such as a television, radio and fan. Children's understandings of well-being were influenced by their sociocultural and economic milieu; for example, boys from rural areas considered ownership of agricultural lands and equipment and having one's own house as indicators of well-being.

There was also an emotional dimension to children's understandings of well-being. For example, girls in the rural Poompuhar site felt that girls who did not have to work outside the home experienced greater well-being than those who did; that they were happier and always smiling (see Annex 3 for further details).

There were some variations in how children and adults perceived a good life for children in their communities. Caregivers emphasised their concern for social approval and community norms, while children placed greater emphasis on material, physical and emotional indicators, recognising the importance of social relationships nonetheless. Caregivers made references to the positive aspects of children's work, especially of girls, as it was believed this would help them in the future to adjust to their new environments upon marriage.

The data suggested that children were observant of the life situations that shape well-being positively and negatively; they felt concerned about potential barriers and felt vulnerable in confronting them. Family emerged as the major source of support for children. Boys, however, viewed their peers as providing essential support as well.

Children and caregivers identified a variety of risks that children confronted in their daily lives and that threaten their well-being. Risks related to the work place, including the health hazards of/at work, the physical environment of the community, alcoholism and eve-teasing. Caregivers of boys were particularly concerned about negative peer influences. They were worried that their children would fall into 'bad ways' by coming under the influence of children who roamed around, attending neither work nor school. Living in a small and congested community itself appeared to be risky for children. For example, caregivers from the urban site in Hyderabad did not allow children to go out and play for fear they would cause trouble in the community.

Services

Pre-school (*anganwadi*) emerged as an important institution in the lives of young children. Teachers noted differences between children who had attended *anganwadis* and those who had not; the former were thought to begin primary school socially adjusted and better prepared, having learned some letters of the alphabet and nursery rhymes. Children recalled their days in pre-school as generally positive, while caregivers were more critical of the poor-quality services on offer. Caregivers did, however, recognise the potential role *anganwadis* could play in preparing children for primary school, in addition to the value of the nutritional

supplements provided. *Anganwadi* teachers were generally challenged by insufficient resources, low pay and lack of space.

Many younger and older children reported enjoying school, and provided information on aspects such as access and quality. All of the research communities had local primary schools, but secondary schools were often located at a distance, especially for rural students. The main issue with regard to educational services was poor access to good-quality, nearby high schools.

One of the sensitive topics that emerged during discussion was that of corporal punishment: children were upset by physical punishment but were hesitant to voice their concerns, possibly for fear that their teachers might beat them. Furthermore, some of them believed that corporal punishment was carried out for the benefit of children, to discipline them into behaving well.

Children's health services, particularly in rural areas, were considered of poor quality and many families were therefore pushed to seek out private services. The services of the auxiliary nurse-midwife, particularly with regard to children and immunisation, were well-known, but there was a recognised need for improvement. Information was also gathered on other services – such as the Public Distribution System (PDS), which enables poor households to receive rations at subsidised prices; the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme; the India Kranthi Patham funded by the World Bank for state-level poverty alleviation; and social security – which have made a positive difference to the lives of resource-poor households. The discussions also brought to light the areas that needed improvement in order for these services to fulfil their intended purpose.

Future rounds of Young Lives qualitative research in Andhra Pradesh will map trends in childhood poverty and document changes in the lives, families and communities of case-study children. Qualitative research will continue to highlight the experiences, perceptions and aspirations of children within the changing contexts of their families and communities, and will provide valuable data to complement and enrich ongoing survey research.

1. Introduction

1.1 About Young Lives

The Young Lives project is an innovative long-term research project investigating the changing nature of childhood poverty in four developing countries – Ethiopia, India (in the state of Andhra Pradesh), Peru and Vietnam. The project aims to improve understanding of the causes and consequences of childhood poverty and to examine the impact of certain policies on children's well-being in order to inform effective policy development and the targeting of child welfare interventions. The objectives of the study are to provide good-quality long-term data about the lives of children living in poverty, tracing linkages between key policy changes and children's well-being, and informing and responding to the needs of policymakers, planners and other stakeholders.

The Young Lives project uses a range of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, Policy Monitoring and Analysis (PMA) and Child Budget Monitoring (CBM) to track, over a 15-year period, the lives and fortunes of children growing up in poverty in the study countries. The study is designed to collect longitudinal data on two cohorts of children: 2,000 children in each country born in 2000/1 (the 'Younger Cohort') and 1,000 children in each country born in 1994/5 (the 'Older Cohort').

These groups provide insight into every phase of childhood. The younger children are being tracked from infancy to their mid-teens and the older children through to adulthood, when some will become parents themselves. When this is combined with information gathered about the children's parents, the project will be able to reveal much about the intergenerational transfer of poverty, how families on the margins move in and out of poverty, and the policies that can make a real difference to their lives.

Through interviews, group work and case studies with the children, their parents, teachers, community representatives and others, the project is collecting a wealth of information not only about their material and social circumstances, but also about their own perspectives on their lives, and aspirations for the future, set against the environmental and social realities of their communities.

1.2 About this report

Qualitative research is a major feature of the Young Lives project during Phase 3 funding (2006-9), drawing on a range of qualitative and participatory methods to understand the diverse aspirations and experiences of children from different geographical, socio-economic and cultural locations.

The qualitative research component is premised on the notion that children are social actors in their own right, capable of providing essential information about the way in which poverty impacts upon their lives and well-being. Children's own understandings and perspectives serve as a major component of the qualitative data, along with the views of key adults in their lives. The aim has been to produce a detailed and grounded description of children's lives and the dynamic processes that underlie their life trajectories in ways that will complement quantitative data analysis and inform policy and communications work. The research investigates the interaction of resources, capabilities, structures and children's agency, and focuses on the meanings children and caregivers give to their actions and experiences in the context of the opportunities and constraints that shape their lives.

Qualitative data collection was carried out with a sub-sample of Young Lives children, as well as members of their families and communities, in each of the four study countries. Both the Younger and Older Cohort have been included in this research. Following an intensive period of planning and pilot work during June 2007, qualitative data collection for the first round was undertaken during the last quarter of 2007 and the second round during September to November 2008. This report is an analysis of the data collected in Andhra Pradesh during October and November 2007 covering children, caregivers, teachers, health workers and community representatives from the four Young Lives sites selected as a sub-sample from the original 20 included in the quantitative study.

This research focuses on two central themes: a) *Resources, Choices and Transitions*, which includes time use, service access and quality, and b) *Risk, Protective Processes and Well-being*, which includes resilience. It seeks to address the following key questions, which will also be examined in this report:

- What are the key transitions in children’s lives, how are they experienced (particularly in relation to activities, relationships, identities and well-being) and what influences these experiences?
- How is children’s well-being understood and evaluated by children, caregivers and other stakeholders? What shapes these different understandings, and what causes them to change? What do children, caregivers and other stakeholders identify as sources of and threats to well-being, and what protective processes can enable children to minimise these threats?
- How do policies, programmes and services shape children’s transitions and well-being? What are the different stakeholder perspectives on these processes? What is the interplay between public, private and not-for-profit sectors and communities within these processes?

1.3 Methodology

Sampling

The India qualitative research was conducted by a team based at Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam, Tirupati. Fieldwork was carried out in four selected sites across Andhra Pradesh: Polur, near Charminar in Hyderabad; Poompuhar in Mahabubnagar district; Katur in Anantapur district; and Patna in Srikakulam district.²

Sites were selected in light of a shortlist made by the Oxford team in consultation with the India quantitative team. This ensured the coverage of one rural, one urban and one tribal site. The spread across the three regions of Andhra Pradesh – i.e., Coastal Andhra, Telangana and Rayalaseema – was also taken into account, as well as the number of Young Lives children within each community and the extent to which they represented characteristics of the community. Children were also selected in light of gender, caste, parental existence, school attendance, pre-school attendance and school type (e.g., government or private).

Based on the above criteria, a total of 48 children were selected, 12 from each research site (six from each age cohort equally split according to gender). Eight further children were selected as standby respondents.

² In order to protect the identities of the participants, pseudonyms are used for both sites and children’s names throughout the paper.

Methods

The methods employed during the research included:

- *Individual interviews* with children (both cohorts), caregivers and other key stakeholders/gatekeepers, e.g., pre-school, primary and high school teachers, health workers and the village head (*sarpanch*)
- *Group-based interviews and focus-groups* with caregivers and other key stakeholders, such as teachers, staff of government hospitals and community representatives
- *Participatory group exercises* with children from both the Younger (mixed) and Older (separately for boys and girls) Cohorts
- *Semi-structured observations* in the home, school and community setting which provided the context for analysing and understanding the data.

1.4 Outline of the report

The following three sections of the report relate to the findings, considered in light of the three research themes laid out above – transitions, well-being and services – and according to cohort, gender and research site. The final section considers the policy questions and implications that emerge from the research.

2. Transitions

This section provides preliminary findings from the first round of qualitative data relating to the following research questions:

- What are the key transitions in children's lives, how are they experienced (particularly in relation to activities, relationships, identities and well-being) and what influences these experiences?

In-depth interviews with case-study children and their caregivers inform an understanding of the key transitions for the Older Cohort of children. They are supported by data from group exercises concerning time use, life-course 'draw and tell' and school transitions.

2.1 Educational transitions in the Younger Cohort

Transitions in the Younger Cohort are mainly related to education and are explained in terms of moving to primary school, either from pre-school or home, as either a day student or a hostel resident. School enrolment among the Young Lives sample children is quite high, with the majority of the case-study children already enrolled in primary school. Half of these children attended the local government primary school and most of the remaining children attended a private school, either as day students or by staying in the hostel. Entry into these institutions is reflective of the multiple pathways of transition into education, either via pre-school or through direct entry into the primary school or hostel. The sub-sample drawn for the qualitative study provides evidence of five different pathways through which the children engage with primary education.

Government pre-school → Government primary school

Evidence from the Expenditure Index based on data from Young Lives household surveys shows that three quarters of the sample children are from poorer households (the first three quintiles), and the remaining quarter fall into quintile four, with no households being classified in the fifth quintile. This suggests that government school is perhaps the only option for most sample households, in light of their inability to meet the costs of private education. For a quarter of children who come from households in the fourth quintile, it is the local availability and convenience of primary schooling that informs their choice. As the children are still young, parents prefer their children to attend local schools, which are considered 'good enough', instead of travelling long distances to attend a private school. One mother from Poompuhar, whose daughter Shanmuka Priya attends the local government primary school, says:

We tell them [teachers] now and then but it is of no use. Sometimes we go and tell them in the school. We also talk to the teacher from the village [vidya volunteer]. But it is no use. The primary school is particularly bad. The teachers are different for high school and this is better. The head master for the primary school hardly comes to the school. As such, the teachers do not take their job seriously. Even the local teachers do not go regularly. They keep doing all other jobs. We watch them in the village. (Shanmuka Priya's caregiver, Poompuhar)

She, however, prefers to keep her daughter in the same school.

Half of the case-study children underwent the transition from government pre-school to government primary school. These children tended to have attended the local government *anganwadi* for a period of one or two years prior to admission into the local government primary. Their experiences of transition seem to be easier compared to those of children who attend school at a distance from their locality, or who stay in a hostel. Equal numbers of boys and girls fall into this trajectory. However, a geographical difference is discernable, with relatively more children from the rural and tribal sites following this pathway than those from the urban site, where there are more diverse educational options available to children in their immediate locality.

Issues relating to the experiences of children undergoing this transition relate mainly to adjusting to the new environment, to the new and long school schedule, to the different treatment by teachers who now use corporal punishment, and to having to write a lot during their studies. In response to a query about what she did in the school that day, Shanmuka Priya says, 'I went to school, appeared for the examinations to write a, aa, e, ee [Telugu alphabets]; after writing the exam, sir came to the class and he asked me to write on the slate – [*Diddu* meaning over-writing the alphabets put down on the slate so that the child not only remembers the alphabets but also learns the writing skill] for a long time'. Children from almost all research sites made reference to the use of corporal punishment at primary school, in contrast to their experiences at the pre-school, which generated a climate of fear around their new school and teachers.

Home → Private primary school

Children who fall into this trajectory have moved into a private school directly from a home environment, without having previously attended a formal pre-school. However, private primary schools tend to include nursery, Lower Kindergarten (LKG) and Upper Kindergarten (UKG) classes which act as a substitute for separate pre-school enrolment, often also insisting that children be enrolled before the age of 5. These children's experiences of 'pre-

school' and the subsequent transition to primary are therefore very different since they are exposed to a 12-year formal school set-up straight away, with a more formal school environment. Most of the children who fall into this trajectory are from the urban site and belong to quintiles three and five, clearly indicating that the poorest households do not usually attend private schools.

The rationale behind this decision is well explained by a mother of an urban child, who considered it important to send her child to school as early in life as possible, so that he 'learns well'. Private school is therefore a strategic option, since government schools admit children into Grade 1 only after reaching 5 years of age. Another urban mother talks of the importance of children attending LKG and UKG before going to Grade 1. Aziz's mother says, 'because he was not studying properly, to learn in a better way [he is sent to kindergarten]; yes, then he will study properly in the first grade.'

Caregivers are also influenced by factors such as a perception of better quality at private schools in terms of the attention that is paid to the children, improved regularity in the carrying out of classes, the teaching methodology and the subsequent learning outcomes, the perceived importance of English as a medium of instruction and high expectations of the outcomes of education. Significantly, they often talked about the importance of providing children with 'lives' that are different from their own and which do not involve the same occupation or level of effort. As Sahithi's mother states:

We have to go with the times and get them educated and let them be employed. I have absolutely no fears. I am confident that the girl can be self-reliant to stand on her own feet. When she is grown up, I want her to be settled Hyderabad or in any big city. If she is in a very big city then the child can be very happy. There will be a change in environment, there will be a lot of facilities and she can be comfortable to attend to every one and things will be at her disposal. In case of there being guests, she need not be uncomfortable and be at ease and be very comfortable. (Sahithi's caregiver, Katur)

Caregivers who send their children to private school often visit the school and enquire about the child's education, in stark contrast to the attitudes and conduct of parents in government schools. This could be related to an incentive effect, generated by the fact that parents of children in private schools want to ensure they are getting the most for their money. Parents view the better-quality education provided by private schools as a good way of spending money. For example, Sahithi (quintile 3) is a rural girl attending a private school and staying in the hostel. Her mother stated that the fees were 9,000 rupees (£127) per academic year, but that this level of fee 'doesn't matter, as long as she is studying well, it doesn't matter how much money we spend upon it, we are determined to do it. We didn't study, so her father is thinking of educating her completely. We are all thinking of it.'

Government pre-school → Private primary school

Children who fall into this trajectory have initially attended the government *anganwadi* in the community before being enrolled in a private primary school. Three of the four children in this trajectory are from the same rural site, and have also attended the local government primary school for a couple of months before being shifted into a private school for reasons similar to those detailed above, relating to the perceived higher quality of private education. All three of these children also now attend an English-medium school.

It has been a recent practice in this community to first send the children to the local pre-school because it is within the community, and the children can become accustomed to attending school while living at home, thereby preparing them for the private school which

they will subsequently attend. However, these children tend to be set back by one or two years because the private schools require readmission into the English-medium kindergarten, meaning that their time spent in a Telugu-medium *anganwadi* is discounted. It is said that this prepares them more effectively for Grade 1 through providing exposure to the new language, new syllabus and new schedule. As a result, children in this category go through more transitions into primary school than those in the other two categories.

For children falling into this trajectory, alternative living arrangements have to be made since the schools are located at some distance from the community and the children are not able to commute on a daily basis. As a result, parents choose to place them in hostels or seek support from extended family members. The children are therefore required to make the additional adjustment of moving away from home. While talking of her daughter's transition to the hostel, Chandani's mother (Patna) stated, 'she cried for a few days; later she went to the school without any problem'. Interestingly, it is not only the children but also the caregivers who are required to learn to live without their young children at home. A rural mother who had placed her daughter in the private school and hostel talks about missing her daughter badly, and being able to meet her only on specific days as prescribed by the school. This is, however, seen as a sacrifice worth making, in light of the perceived superiority in the quality of education that it provides. As Sahithi's mother argued:

First when we joined when we were at Uravakonda [she stayed with grandmother], I missed her. But I felt she must be educated at any cost at the same time. I felt sad, I wanted to see her; I feel like seeing her. Only with an intention of giving her a good education we have sent her there. (*Sahithi's caregiver, Katur*)

Government pre-school → Government hostel

There is only one tribal child who falls into this trajectory. She is the eldest of two girls in a family that belongs to the Jatapu sub-sect of tribes, who are better placed socio-economically compared to the Savara sub-sect. Her father works at the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) farm on a contract basis and earns a monthly income in addition to helping out on the family farm, which is predominantly managed by her mother.

Chandani currently attends the primary school promoted by the ITDA for young tribal girls, a *mini-gurukulam* (Telugu name given to traditional schools). It is a residential school which provides for all the children's needs, including spiritual education. The hostel requires that the children take responsibility for all their personal duties, including washing their own clothes, collecting and maintaining them and washing the dishes used during meals. Chandani talks of the need for her to be in this residential school as a result of her family not having adequate financial resources, saying, 'Yes ma'am I don't like. Well, it's like this. We'll have to pay money if I leave the school, so I continue to stay here'. This is something her parents have told her so that she will continue to stay at the residential school.

The factors that influence parents' decisions to send young tribal girls to these special ITDA hostels include availability and access to improved services, the fact that this is the first generation in this community to be educated, a lack of guidance at home, protection from community influences and wanting a different future for their child. More and more parents want their children to be admitted into these special hostels. As not all of them succeed in gaining admission, they wait for years and do not give up. It is likely that more Young Lives sample children from the above trajectories will shift into this trajectory over the next two to three years.

2.2 Education and work-related transitions in the Older Cohort

The data suggests that four-fifths of the case-study children are enrolled in secondary school. While most children are attending government school, a small number are also enrolled in private school. No distinct relationship can be discerned between the type of school attended and the gender of the children.

The remaining fifth of the sample children are not enrolled in secondary school, instead being engaged in work, either within the household or in waged labour. No gender-based difference is evident in the number of children moving out of school, with almost equal numbers of boys and girls joining the workforce. However, a gender difference is discernable in terms of the *type* of work in which these children engage, with boys being more likely to be involved in paid labour and girls being predominantly occupied with domestic activities or work on the family farm.

Half of the sample children moved from a government primary school to a government secondary school. Children who remained in the same school for secondary level reported a smooth transition, in contrast to that involved in changing school. Changing school was said to present difficulties to the children because of the new environment, new teachers, new friends and the new methods of teaching, which they found to be better than in primary school. Better quality of education and lack of secondary schools in the community were the main reasons cited for children moving between schools. As Kareena put it, 'in that school, the teachers were not good, not providing good education. That is the reason for shifting to this school.' The children mentioned that they were given opportunities to express their feelings about moving to a new school and that, in general, parents did not force them to change school, although it was primarily their decision.

In some situations, the decision to change school was made by the children themselves. In Katur and Patna, children decided to change school as there was no secondary school available within the community. This added to the difficulty of the transition. Triveni, of Katur, said, 'School is very far and I have to walk a long distance to reach the school. I find it difficult'. In the absence of alternate transport facilities connecting different communities and due to the hours of the school day, children were sometimes forced to walk long distances to attend high schools. For example, in Poompuhar and Polur, the children had the opportunity of continuing in the same school on the same premises, while in Poompuhar, the local government school only provided education up to Grade 7 and the children therefore had to travel a minimum of 7-15km to access secondary school.

Most children remember the transition from primary to secondary school positively, citing their mothers, fathers and friends as the main sources of support during that time. Many of the sample children viewed secondary school as being more useful, serious and organised than primary school, and a good number of children felt that they learnt the value of education only after they started attending secondary school. As a result, they do not mind walking the long distance. The children also described secondary school as being of better quality than primary school, stating that the teachers were better at teaching and attended classes more regularly. The school observation and caregiver interviews in Poompuhar also provide evidence of this. Ranadeep remarks: 'When I first attended this school I had a fear that teachers will beat me. But soon I realised that teachers here teach well. There is more discipline here and increased concentration on studies.' He goes on to say that he has improved his knowledge and has become harder working after reaching secondary school. Ramya, a girl from Poompuhar, also notes that, 'after attending the secondary school I have realised that teachers here teach well, treat us well and are very strict'. Boys and girls also

made reference to the change in the school schedule, with more subjects being taught, a greater amount of written work required and more time being spent on studies.

The caregivers described the transition to secondary school in terms of changes in subjects taught, requirements for a greater number of books and longer distances to travel to school. In the case of Sarada, this meant travel of 7-10km and led to her being out of school for a period of time. Caregivers also mentioned the fact that children tended to cry when they first arrived in the new school and took a few days to adjust to the new environment, friends and teachers. They were, however, of the opinion that children's educational performance improved after reaching secondary school.

In general, the children were keen to progress to higher education and were able to clearly express their expectations. The children recognised the importance of education in becoming a doctor, policeman/woman, teacher or an *anganwadi* worker. The findings from the well-being exercise also demonstrated that children from all research sites identified good education or going to school as an important indicator of well-being (see Annex 3 for more details). The expressed the importance of studying hard to earn money, get a job and settle well in life (Harika, Kareena and many others). However, they feel that they need the support of parents and government to facilitate the continuation of education beyond grade ten. The girls from Poompuhar were of the opinion that, in spite of the governmental programmes to promote higher education among girls, they still may not be able to study beyond Grade 10 as their families are governed by community norms preventing girls from attending higher education institutions located outside the community. It was mentioned during the collective interviews with community representatives and the individual interviews with caregivers and the *sarpanch* that, until recent years, girls were educated only up to Grade 7. It was the upgrading of the upper primary school in the village to a secondary school that reversed this trend. In comparison to the rural children from Poompuhar and Katur, those from Patna and Polur were relatively clearer, more specific and more assertive about their educational expectations and the possibility of achieving them. This was particularly true of the girls in the study.

Links between secondary school and being 'grown up'

For many children, reaching secondary education meant being considered 'grown up' by parents, a transformation which carried with it expectations about engaging in work at home and on the farm. It was evident from both the interviews with children and the group exercises on time use that almost all the children were engaged in household/domestic activities. However, there was a gender-based difference in the type of household work in which they were engaged. While the girls tended to carry out chores such as washing utensils, sweeping the floor, washing clothes, cooking and fetching water, boys were generally engaged in outside work, such as fetching water, getting provisions, etc.

Those children who came from land-owning households were also required to work on the family farm during the peak agricultural season. This was particularly true of the children from the rural communities (Poompuhar and Katur) in comparison to the urban and tribal community. Half of the children from the tribal community resided in hostels and their daily activities therefore did not include engagement in farm work at that time. However, they did mention being engaged in work on the farm during their school vacations, if required. Children from the two rural communities were therefore required to manage school, home and farm work for two to three months each year, during the season for groundnut and cotton crops. Unable to strike a balance between the three, children missed school for two to three months during this season and then found it difficult to cope with the lessons at school. For

instance, Harika says that her school attendance is irregular during the cotton pollination season and the teachers then scold her for not attending school. She has to make up for the lost classes and ends up with poor results. Further, Ramya finds the work on the farm difficult and painful. Her hands ache after the day's work, her legs ache after the long walk to and from the fields, and the long day in the sun gives her a headache. Importantly, she views this as inevitable, stating that the cotton farm work has to be done and the family cannot engage paid labour due to the need to repay loans which were taken out in connection with the marriage of her two older sisters.

The existing government and NGO services cater to the needs of children who have dropped out of school but those who miss school for a specific period to attend to the seasonal agricultural work hardly receive the attention of the policy makers. This raises the question of whether schools in such areas should therefore have a different schedule in order to enable these children to attend regularly

Hostel-specific transitions

Half of the 'Older Cohort case study children from Patna moved from a government primary school to a government hostel, with Patna being the only community in which children moved into hostels. Caregivers viewed the opportunity to gain admission into an ITDA hostel as a blessing for their children. As Preethi's mother reports, 'Here [the village] it [school] is only up to fifth grade. After passing fifth grade, we thought it will be good if she joined the hostel. It helps for better studies, as government has given the funds, it will be good to educate her there. The government helps us to continue her studies'. The facilities available in the hostel, which are perceived to be of far better quality than those available at home, combined with the educational guidance provided by teachers sometimes outside of regular school hours serve as major factors influencing parents' decisions to send their children to hostels. This extract from an interview with Keerthi's mother provides a detailed account of parents' perceptions of the benefits of moving into a hostel:

She is staying in the hostel only. She is staying in the hostel from fifth grade itself. She studied up to fourth grade in our village school. In between, I made her write the exam in the Vivekananda school because the studies in that school are good and they will provide good food and also they follow good discipline which improves the intelligence of the students. With this attitude in mind, I made her to write the exam as soon as she got the opportunity. She had passed fifth grade there and now she is in ninth grade. From the time she joined in the school, she is studying well until now, and she is concentrating only on studies...How difficult it is, to provide financial support to such type of studies, but still we will take it as a challenge by working hard and reach the goal. (Keerthi's caregiver, Patna)

Hostels are also seen by caregivers as a means of protecting children from the influences of the community and peers.

In spite of the various adjustments that children are required to make while staying in the hostel, they prefer to remain there in view of the facilities provided and the opportunities for study. Children find the hostel environment very different to that of their previous school, encountering peers from different communities and sub-sects who do not speak the same language. Children run away from the hostel but parents send them back. This cycle continues for between three and six months and if the children manage to endure this process, they tend to complete their schooling. These months are therefore a crucial point in determining hostel children's transition to secondary education. Data from the collective interviews with primary and secondary school teachers in this site also support this finding. Teachers stated that tribal children from the Savara sub-sect find it difficult to adjust to the school for the first few months,

and leave as a group (all from a particular village). The community teachers appointed by the ITDA bring them back and then need to handle them carefully.

Private school-specific transitions

Data concerning transitions in private schools are derived from two case-study children: a boy from Polur and a girl from Patna. These children attended private primary schools and then moved to private secondary schools. Both described this transition as smooth. Talking about the shift from the primary school in Grade 5, Santhi remarks, ‘Study will be good here. We felt that it will be good. We came because of that. My father is a teacher; he knows everything’. This particular family had moved residence to a nearby town to provide a good education for their children. The father is employed in a government school in a remote tribal area, to which he has to commute 30km each day. He is motivated to travel these distances in order to facilitate the provision of quality education in a private school for his children. Importantly, Santhi’s father and cousins serve as a great source of inspiration for her, as she would like to become a doctor. While the transition to the new school was not easy because she had ‘to leave her friends behind’ and adjust to a new environment, she feels that she has now settled in. Sharing her experiences of moving to the new school, Santhi says, ‘that time they [the subjects at the primary school] were very easy; now also I find them easy but after coming to secondary school the volume of studies increases, isn’t it. There I studied well; here also I am studying well’. The discussion with Santhi revealed that she had managed the transition to secondary school well, in part because she had quality education at the primary level.

Further parts of the interview revealed that private schools are not free from corporal punishment. ‘He [the teacher] beats [said in a very low voice]. He beats a lot, very hard. If any mistakes are done by one he will punish the entire class, he will retain all the students until late in the evening as a punishment.’ Children and parents do not question or complain about the use of corporal punishment for fear that the child may not receive the required attention in the future. When Santhi was asked whether such incidents were reported to the headmaster, she replied, ‘we do not tell, if we tell, this sir will not care for us. He will not teach well’. Her friend then added, ‘he will not take care of us, he will avoid us’. The use of corporal punishment in private secondary schools contrasts with the situation in government schools, where corporal punishment is not common at secondary level, particularly with girls.

Transitions among school drop-outs

Five of the case-study children – about one-fifth of the total – have dropped out of school and moved into work. While two of them (one boy and one girl) work on the family farm, the remaining three are engaged in waged work (two boys and one girl). Three of the five children are from Katur, and one each from Poompuhar and Polur. That five out of 24 children in the sub-sample are school drop-outs is a cause of concern. The quantitative data also indicates that between the two rounds of data collection, a greater number of children have moved into paid work and discontinued school, with figures increasing from 6.14 per cent in Round 1 to 20.44 per cent in Round 2. Four of the five children discontinued school at the secondary level while one child from Polur dropped out after completing the primary level.

Other factors that push children out of school include migration (Bhavana) and having to take up paid employment in order to clear their family’s rent debts (Revanth). Revanth felt bad about not being able to go to school and recalls his school days positively:

When I was going to school I used to play with children, draw the pictures on the walls, but now there is nothing. Since two years I am working in the fields to repay the debts to the landlord. (Revanth, Older Cohort, Katur)

Mohan, a boy from Poompuhar, reported that he had discontinued school to work on the family farm. However, the caregiver's interview and discussion with neighbours and teachers suggested instead that he had chosen to discontinue school for other reasons. As his mother says:

He finds many excuses: sirs [teachers] scold him, no clothes, no uniform, he finds one or the other excuse. He says that he will go and we also think that he will go [to school] and we go to the work, but he plays or waits for the power to be on and runs to watch the TV. I told him to go to the school like other children are going, but he counters and says, 'who are you to ask me, I will not go'. (Mohan's caregiver, Poompuhar)

She also reported that, 'the daughter is in third grade. She dropped out later. She studied till third and stopped there. She says, "brother is not going so I will not"'. Other reasons for school drop-out included the distance children need to travel in order to reach school. Importantly, most children moving out of school feel that this is not their choice but the result of prevailing conditions at home.

2.3 Other transitions in the Older Cohort

Other transitions in Older Cohort have been explained both by boys and girls and their caregivers in terms of physical changes and their increased responsibilities. There are differences in how boys and girls experience these changes and also in the expectations of parents and caregivers at large, although few variations between sites could be discerned.

Transitions specific to girls

Girls reported reaching menarche as an important transition point shaping their lives. The discussions indicate that girls receive little preparation either at home or at school for this event, except for an informal discussion with an aunt or close relative. Very few girls had actually talked to their mothers about how their body would change. Instead, friends at school and older girls in the community were reported as the main source of information on this issue. For example, in the individual interview, Bhavana said that she had discussed physical changes and shared her problems with her friends and neighbours. Importantly, fear about attaining menarche and the accompanying physical changes was reported by half the girls. As Kareena stated, 'first when I started my menstrual cycle I was scared. Then my aunt told me that this will happen to all girls'. The sudden event causes anxiety in girls because they are not adequately prepared, a problem that could be easily avoided. Reaching menarche is marked by celebrations either on the fifth or seventh day when a lunch or dinner is hosted by the family for relatives and others within the community. Traditionally, when early marriages were in practice, this ritual served the purpose of letting others know that a girl had become eligible and marriages were often fixed during these celebrations. The caregivers, during both the individual and collective interviews, talked about the practice of keeping girls inside at home for five to seven days during menarche. During this period they are not allowed to touch anything or any person in the house. In some families the practice continues for every cycle but is restricted to three days. Restrictions preventing girls from participating in religious ceremonies, festivals and even attending temples during their menstrual cycle continue to be common in many communities. A few girls expressed the fact that they dislike these practices but are pushed into following them since they are cultural and inevitable. Sarada said, 'at that time of menstruation we are not allowed to touch anything, not to touch god. I don't like such type of things'.

Girls in secondary school also talked about the restrictions placed on them because they are viewed as 'grown up'. For example, girls from the Muslim community in Polur were expected to wear *burkhas* when they went out in public. Similarly, girls in the rural communities referred

to changes in dressing patterns that accompanied this transition. They are expected to wear long skirts and half sarees, so that their dress fully covers them. As Latha's mother said, 'during childhood she was wearing frocks, but after attaining puberty she wears *langas* (long skirts) and half sarees'.

Other restrictions relate to play and movement. Girls do not attend school or work on the farm for four to five days during each menstrual cycle. Though these restrictions are explained more in terms of cultural practices, the lack of appropriate toilet facilities at school also promotes such practices. Triveni does not go to school for three days during menstruation as she feels uncomfortable sitting on the classroom floor for long; while Sania's mother prefers not to send her daughter to school for five days. Girls from Katur and Polur said that they are never sent to public places alone, even over short distances; they are always accompanied by a male, even if it be a younger brother. In addition, girls are very often not allowed to play outdoor games once they reach puberty. Sarada says, 'my mother scolds me, she doesn't allow me to play, she says now I am big and should not play'. Importantly, her mother states that failure to adhere to these restrictions would result in her being subjected to comments from the community which may subsequently make it difficult to get her daughter married.

Boy-specific transitions

For boys, the physical changes that accompany puberty were thought of in terms growing of moustache and beard, the voice breaking, growing tall and becoming fat. Like the girls, the boys in the sample received little preparation for these physiological changes, often relying on friends to offer support. The transition into puberty goes more unnoticed in boys as it is not marked by specific events or changed practices that restrict them. In fact, they are considered to be more responsible and are expected to move and carry out work independently. They even serve as guards to their sisters, both older and younger. Caregivers talked little about the changes that affect boys when compared to girls.

The impact of increased responsibility

The children described the increased responsibilities that come with puberty in terms of engaging in domestic chores, working on the farms, fetching water and firewood, shopping for groceries, etc. Boys and girls also talked about taking care of younger siblings, nieces and nephews and the elderly in the family. Caregivers felt that children of this age were more aware of the family situation and were not as demanding as at a younger age, accepting their share of household work without being told to do so, as well as being capable of managing the home independently if required. Ameena's mother finds her daughter to be an emotional support to her: 'my child gives me emotional support. When I am worried she asks me not to worry and cry. She says we are all fine. We will look after you and take care of you.' Boys start thinking about earning and contributing to the family's income, their sister's marriage and other rituals that are the parents' responsibility.

2.4 Children's time use

The group exercises were particularly revealing about the time use allocations of the sample children. Unlike the children in Category 1, children in Categories 2, 3 and 6 have additional time for school and education-related activities.³ Group exercises on time use suggest that

³ Categories relate to different school trajectories as described in Annexes 1 and 2 of this report.

they are able to spend 50 to 60 per cent of their time on school and other education-related activities. The corresponding figures for children in Category 1 are 20 to 30 per cent of their time. Children in Categories 4 and 5 spend 50 to 60 per cent of their time on work. All the children spend 10 to 20 per cent of their time on household activities and have little time for leisure. While the boys play outdoor games during their leisure time, girls watch TV along with family members. Sarada goes to the neighbour's house to watch certain serials, as they do not have a TV at home. Narrating her daily schedule, she said:

I woke up at 6 o'clock, yesterday, then swept the floor [inside the home], then washed the dishes, then prepared food and my mother helped me in getting ready, interlacing my hair into a plait. I took a bath and got ready, then went to school and appeared for examination and then came home for lunch and again went to school. Returned home at four in the evening, and then washed the dishes and swept the floor and prepared food, that's all. Watched TV and went to bed; watched TV with my neighbours. (Sarada, Older Cohort, Poompuhar)

She recorded that she spent 40 per cent of her time on school and related activities, 20 per cent on household work, 20 per cent on personal work and 10 per cent on leisure. A similar pattern was reported by most children in Category 1, except that the proportion of time spent on household activities reduced when children were engaged in farm work. The time available for leisure remained at 10 per cent for almost all the girls, while for boys it was between 10 and 20 per cent.

3. Well-being

This section offers a preliminary analysis of children's understanding of well-being and ill-being. It aims to address the following research questions:

- How is children's well-being understood and evaluated by children, caregivers, and other stake holders?
- What shapes these different understandings and what causes them to change?
- What do children, caregivers and other stakeholders identify as sources of and threats to well-being, and what protective processes can enable children to minimise these threats?

3.1 Younger Cohort

Children's understandings of well-being

Interviews with the Younger Cohort concerning understandings of well-being were challenging. Respondents required a great deal of prompting in order to provide responses. Activities in a mixed-sex group yielded more information than individual interviews. Great importance was given to physical characteristics of well-being. Facets of social relationships were also deemed important by most children, in the form of behaving in a friendly manner, respecting elders and not fighting or quarrelling. Attending school regularly and studying hard were also considered important indicators of doing well. Doing *namaz* (prayer) regularly was particularly emphasised by the children from Polur. Being beaten by teachers, demanding money from parents to buy snacks, getting bitten by dogs and the presence of snakes in the community were some of the risks outlined by children during the course of the group

activities. Children from Polur talked about vehicles being driven recklessly on the streets where they play, the bomb massacre near the Charminar (a monument in the South of Hyderabad with a bustling bazaar) and the presence of strangers in the community as defining some of their fears and anxieties.

Children as young as 5 or 6 years of age were keenly observant of occurrences in their community. During the child-led tour in Poompohar with a mixed group of boys and girls, the children talked about the potential building of a railway track in the village, the laying of which would result in a number of people being displaced. 'His house would go if the track is laid,' said one girl innocently, pointing towards a boy who was hanging around in the vicinity when the exercise was conducted.

The children also demonstrated a keen awareness of the impact of corporal punishment in school as a determinant of well-being. Indeed, not being physically punished at school was a significant indicator of well-being according to the children from Poompohar. During the interviews and discussions with caregivers, it was found that children are beaten regularly by teachers and parents for being naughty at school and for irregular attendance.

Caregivers' perspectives

Many of the caregivers stated that their children were doing well in terms of physical health. While most of the children encountered some health-related problems in the first three years of their lives, they were presently doing well physically, except for an occasional fever and cold. Most caregivers also felt that their children had become used to a routine after having started attending formal school and were therefore becoming more independent in terms of grooming themselves, eating by themselves, etc. They were happy that their children attended school regularly, were more disciplined, did some household work and played well with their neighbours, relatives and friends. However, stubbornness, temper tantrums and irritability were also listed as some of the behaviour-related problems manifest in their children.

Caregivers were often concerned that they had limited resources with which to meet the material needs of their children. Household heads often borrowed from their parents or took out loans in order to meet the family's needs in times of financial crisis. For instance, Rahul's mother said that he studies diligently for long periods of time and that sometimes she feels that it would have been nice if he had a belt to wear like the other children. Most of the caregivers were able to provide the minimum essentials required when the child moved into school.

In terms of enforcing discipline on children for non-attendance of school or non-completion of homework, it seemed that it was often the father who took on the responsibility for beating the child. There were, however, some caregivers who tried to convince their under-performing children to improve by other means. For example Roshan's father, who lives in

Polur, said:

Before the teachers and myself know the reasons, my son is getting weak in studies. In maths and social studies he is weak. I concentrate on the child. I tell him to concentrate more on those subjects. Otherwise, one year's efforts will be futile and my expenditure will be in vain. In this way I make him to understand. (Roshan's caregiver, Polur)

In Polur, parents often enforced this through not allowing children to go out and play.

Many caregivers felt that the place in which they lived was ‘not good’, which had implications for the decisions they made for their children. As Roshan’s father put it:

This locality is full of migrants from other states and this locality is not good. There are rowdies. And in my family I did not want to get influenced by that. A single fish can spoil the whole sea. I told them [his children] with care and affection that your father and mother will get a bad name and what will you get by spending time outside for two to four hours. (Roshan’s caregiver, Polur)

Most caregivers spent money on their children’s health during the first three years of their lives. Caregivers also talked about the role of financial aid provided by relatives, and their ability to procure a loan during a financial crisis. Risks to children – such as wells, canals, snakes, thick shrubs and trees, crowded streets and instances of electrocution – were also mentioned by caregivers. Some also mentioned events in children’s lives such as the death of a brother (Polur) and the risk of electrocution (Poompuhar) that created anxiety and fear among the children.

3.2 Older Cohort

Children’s understandings of well-being

Group work with both boys and girls yielded interesting data on children’s subjective understandings of well-being, revealing a range of physical, social, emotional and education-related indicators of well-being.

Physical indicators provided an important means of understanding well-being. According to both boys and girls, wearing neat and clean clothes, bathing regularly and, for the girls, putting on jewellery were detailed as important factors influencing their personal well-being. The sample children also placed great importance on social relationships at household level, extra-household level and the school level. Mutual help, respect, sharing, good behaviour and character were considered as important characteristics of a person doing well in these environments.

Children also cited economic and material indicators as being important in enabling them to have a good life. These included having good food in the form of biscuits, vegetables, chocolates, etc.; and having basic necessities, such as television, radio and a fan. In this context it was observed that the children’s understanding of well-being was in part determined by their milieu. Children from the rural areas, especially boys, considered having agricultural lands and equipment, being rich and owning their own house as determinants of well-being. For instance, Revanth, a boy from Katur, took the landlord he works for to be the epitome of ‘well’, citing his large house, lifestyle and smart appearance as indicators of this state.

From an emotional perspective, girls, especially those from Poompuhar, opined that not working outside the home was essential for well-being and the maintenance of a happy life. The emphasis placed on ‘being happy’, ‘smiling always’ and celebrating festivals underscored the importance of emotional aspects of well-being for children (see Annex 3 for further details).

Education emerged as a key factor determining the well-being of boys and girls, who suggested that a child who is doing well is one who attends school regularly, studies hard, shares materials with others and is respectful towards teachers. The school environment was also cited as an influencing factor in terms of well-being, with children emphasising the importance of a clean environment, good facilities and trained teachers. School therefore emerged as one of the major institutions shaping children’s life experience.

Children's understandings of ill-being

When children were asked to consider factors which contributed to a child's not doing well, they emphasised a range of physical indicators, such as being dirty, not grooming oneself and having health problems. Factors pertaining to social relations also emerged as important determinants of 'ill-being', such as stealing, quarrelling, not being friendly, not sharing, being in bad company and having bad habits. Importantly, a child who is not doing well was often characterised as 'one who works outside' the home, perhaps in agricultural or cotton fields (see Annex 3 for further details).

Children's personal understandings of well-being/ill-being

Unlike in the group activity, the Older Cohort children (especially boys) found it difficult to express their views about subjective well-being in the individual interviews. The majority of boys felt that they were doing well in their lives in physical and social terms. However, they seemed to be concerned about differences in the standards of living in their community. As one of the boys noted, 'money is necessary for all people'. The need to own agricultural lands, have a tractor of one's own and own a house were some of their concerns related to the state of well-being. Geographical differences were also discernable, with the majority of the boys in the rural areas – i.e., Katur and Poompuhar – managing to study while also being involved in intra- and extra-household activities, which was not the case in Polur and Patna.

The children in Poompuhar expressed unhappiness about working in the cotton fields. According to these girls, a good life is when they are able to study well, need not work in the fields, are able to wear good clothes and when their parents provide good care and affection. As Ramya, one of the girls from Poompuhar, remarked:

It is very hard, madam. There is pain in the legs. We walk every day. I am also fed up with plucking the buds every day. We have to do the same work everyday even if it is hot. At that time I cover my head with a towel. Sometimes I also get fever. But mostly it is only hands and legs that ache. (Ramya, Older Cohort, Poompuhar)

Girls from Polur and Patna placed great importance on education, argued that 'studying well' is essential for settling down in life.

Caregivers' perspectives on well-being

Caregiver interviews reflected concern for social approval, community norms and education. This was in contrast to the responses of the children, who viewed well-being from a material, physical and emotional perspective.

Community members of Katur and caregivers for the Younger Cohort from Poompuhar felt that having money, looking smart, being in good health, being daring, having good food and studying in private schools were important indicators of well-being. They related a 'good life' to material wealth, with one caregiver stating:

A person who has money is considered as having good life and rich persons will give proper education to children like becoming a doctor, engineer, etc. If there is no money they drop out of their education. There is a difference between the poor and the rich. We can also compare in the dress pattern, celebration of birthday, going to good school etc... we want our children to be in rich position, observe neatness in available situation. Children should look rich. We are in low position when compared to others in the community. (Caregiver, Katur)

In contrast caregivers of Older Cohort boys and girls from Poompuhar and Patna considered studying well, helping in the household work, being respectful and carrying out agricultural work (Poompuhar) to be indicators of 'doing well'.

While for children, having to work was a factor of ill-being, for parents it was more a fact of life. Caregivers often made reference to the necessity of children's work, particularly for girls, as this would help them in the future when they have to adjust to a married environment. This was related to cultural norms and practices that influenced child-rearing practices. For example, a caregiver from Poompuhar stated that work in the cotton fields is traditionally carried out by children. Similarly, another caregiver from Katur felt that a girl should learn to perform both intra- and extra-household work so as to ensure that she will easily transition into married life. This underscores caregivers' preoccupation with the need for social approval and acceptance in the community.

Differences emerge between the rural and urban sites in terms of the importance attributed to education, with parents in the rural sites not placing enormous significance on education as a determinant of well-being. This was in contrast to the urban sites where, as Preethi's mother, who is from Patna, stated:

To make their life good they should study. If they study they can get into employment. We being elders, though we are not educated we are doing hard work. We experienced good and bad. We learned to toil and earn money with it. If they study people will say oh! their child is studying well. For example, this girl she studied from first to fifth grade and then fifth to tenth grade and then she is now in the intermediate [a grade after the tenth grade; refers to a girl in the neighbourhood as an example]. She has studied with interest and came to this level. She may get one of the opportunities in the government. If it is others who have discontinued after the fifth standard and wander on the streets their position will be bad. Their parents can also do nothing. If any opportunity comes they should make use of it. If all are in a good way they will be able to go ahead. (Preethi's caregiver, Patna)

However, the importance of education is not universally accepted among caregivers. In fact, Ramya's caregiver remarked that their community forcibly involved children in agriculture and related activities alongside school, hoping that both would be of use in their future life. Such views reflect concerns about the outcomes of education, which are based on the experiences of a large number of educated rural youths who are unemployed and are forced to go back into the household occupation. This is also evident from an interview with one of the caregivers from Poompuhar, who stated, 'there are many persons who are being educated now... there are many. Even though we have good studies, it is difficult to get a good job'. Caregivers are concerned about their children having a good life, be it in agriculture or higher education.

In most cases, caregivers are of the opinion that their children are doing well in life. They are content with their physical health and would like their sons to study well. A caregiver from Poompuhar perceives her child as 'super' and good-looking. As she says in her own words: 'Dark people are good-looking. They glow and have a spark in the face. Look at him, how is he. Chap is like a wrestler. His father cannot speak like my son. He is very intelligent and clever.' However, this is not to say that caregivers in the rural sites are unsympathetic towards their children's situation. In Katur, they seemed to be concerned about the hardships their children experienced. For example, Bhavana's mother expressed her concern about her daughter's intra- and extra-household work, while Triveni's grandmother feels that her granddaughter's life is difficult as she is an orphan with only her grandmother to support her. She is concerned about how Triveni will live after her death and therefore rears her in a way that prepares her for this.

Risks and resources associated with Older Cohort children's well-being

This section considers risks that children have identified as impacting on their well-being and the resources they have access to or need in order to manage them effectively. The data suggest that children are aware of the life situations that shape and obstruct their well-being, feel concerned about these and are keen to do something about them, but feel vulnerable about not being able to act in certain situations. Family emerges as one of the major sources of support for all children. Though boys and girls have similar views on most issues, girls were able to provide deeper insights into factors that shaped their understandings.

Children's perspectives

The majority of boys viewed friends as a great source of support. They enjoyed spending time with them and derived satisfaction from their company since it allowed them to share their thoughts and feelings. Children recalled happy experiences while in school, the hostel and the neighbourhood. Sharing jokes, dancing and helping each other in their schoolwork were particularly important parts of their relationships.

Family also emerged as a crucial support system in boys' responses. Parents, and especially the mother, were described as the most significant actors in their lives since the mother was said to look after everything and take care of her children. As Subbaiah from Poompuhar puts it, 'she holds me, cuddles me. Because she is good and gives me what ever I ask for, it is ok if she scolds'. The majority commented on the support they receive from family members when they are ill and the assistance they are given in completing their homework. Girls also felt that their mother was the most important figure in their lives. They felt free to share their thoughts and feelings with her, as well as being comfortable asking her for material possessions, such as anklets, fancy hairbands and necklaces. A girl from Polur described how her brother or mother would walk her to school every day because it was unsafe for her to go on her own. The majority of the children spoke about the help extended by their relatives and the guidance they received from them about their futures. They valued their parents' advice and the training they provided in intra- and extra-household work. For example, an orphan girl from Katur talked about her respect for her paternal grandmother who, in spite of various hardships, brought her up along with her siblings in the absence of their parents.

Children also talked about the impact of the family environment on their well-being. Ranadeep, in tears, said this of his father: 'He goes for work but comes drunk. He drinks quite often and beats my mother. If I go in the middle [i.e., if Ranadeep intervenes] he will beat me. He does not listen to me.' According to Ranadeep, all the men in the village are in the habit of consuming alcohol and behaving violently as a result.

Individual interviews with children also revealed strong expectations about their futures. Their responses indicated that certain family members (including close relatives) served as role models for the children. For instance, a child from Polur aspires to become a doctor based on his observations of his father who works as a medical assistant in a clinic, while a child from Katur aspires to become an artist like his father. Services provided by government programmes also serve as a source of inspiration and shape children's aspirations. Children from Patna were especially aware of the services provided by the government, particularly the ITDA, as many were accessing these services and some were living in ITDA schools and hostels.

Children's accounts indicated the kinds of risks they managed in their daily lives. One boy noted the lack of safety for girls in public spaces and the severe eve-teasing (gender and

age-specific taunts) endured by girls in Polur. Meanwhile, Ranadeep from Poompuhar recalled horrifying events that had occurred in his community with regard to eve-teasing that resulted in the death of a young girl. He shared his feelings on the incident: 'I don't like teasing the girls. One day I came to know about the killing of a young girl; she was not even married [deaths of girls after marriage are heard of but not of young girls]. I feel bad about this incident. I do not like all these things happening in the village, killing, drinking, gambling, etc.' The practice of keeping of children as bonded labour to clear family debts was also listed as a common local phenomenon. Revanth, from Katur, explained how he had to miss school to work in the local landlord's house: 'Initially I felt happy when I stopped going to school. But now I feel so sad, madam. Day by day workload will be increased in my owner's house. So I feel like going to school.'

Children also voiced some of their everyday fears, such as thick bushes and trees in their communities. They were careful to leave home only when in company, especially during the night. They also expressed fear of snakes and scorpions in the fields. It was interesting to note that children also talked about evil spirits, devils and supernatural forces during their interviews. However, the types of fears expressed by children varied according to whether they came from a rural or urban area. For example, while a child from urban Polur feared being kidnapped, a boy from a rural area was scared of the deserted places that had to be covered on his way to the school.

Interviews with girls provided deeper insights into their understandings of well-being and the factors and situations by which these understandings are shaped. Like the boys, they expressed the central role played by parents. For instance, Ramya said of a boy's family in the community: 'His father comes home drunk and beats his mother. If the son wants to talk to him he does not allow him. He says he is not his son. He feels bad about it. This is not good life. Even if there is money there is no happiness.' Meanwhile, Sarada from Poompuhar was very much disturbed by the absence of a father figure in her family. Her father stays in Mumbai with extended family and visits his home infrequently. She said:

They are there and we are here, and father is not here. During the elections the people who campaign for the candidates come home and ask me to call my mother and father. They think my father is not here, and then I feel bad, though he is alive he is not here with us, all of them vote but not my father. (Sarada, Older Cohort, Poompuhar)

Caregiver's perspectives

Group interviews with the caregivers gave them an opportunity to talk about their feelings and experiences associated with bringing up children. As in the individual interviews, caregivers often expressed unhappiness about their children's circumstances. Those from Katur were especially proud of their children, who managed their work in spite of the difficulties faced. Triveni's grandmother recounted (weeping) how her granddaughters (whose parents are dead) were involved in stone work during the summer vacation to earn small amounts of money to keep the household supplied with basic necessities, such as oil and soap, etc. Similarly, Bhavana's mother shared her woes about the fact that her daughter is compelled to undertake hard work at home and in the fields due to lack of support from her daughter-in-law. Most of the caregivers expressed happiness about their children's physical condition and demonstrated affection towards them.

Most of the caregivers were also concerned about the circumstances prevailing in their respective communities. Mothers from Polur were worried about the antisocial behaviour prevailing in the slum areas in which they lived. Those from Patna expressed fears about the young boys who dropped out of school and whiled away their time doing nothing. Typical

fears associated with the onset of puberty (for example, girls becoming infatuated and falling in love or engaging in pre-marital sex) were also expressed by caregivers, especially those from Patna. As Keerthi's mother put it:

Today's children, whatever the boys say, they are listening and they do not think about their lives. These children, they talk, sing and write slips to pass the time only. They will start thinking regarding these slips and start loving. Once they go away, then they start thinking about life. To pass the time they say something and talk on the phones. They do not know about life. They do not have experience and they just feel it is a pleasure.
(Keerthi's caregiver, Patna)

Many caregivers also spoke of the influence of peer group pressure on their children. Boys' caregivers were especially concerned that their children would fall into 'bad ways' under the influence of other children who roamed around, attending neither work nor school. As a result, many caregivers from Polur did not allow their children to go out and play, saying, 'they go out to play and end up in a quarrel and there is trouble in the locality'. Most of the caregivers from this community said, 'this locality is not good'.

According to interviews with other community members, a child doing well would be neat and tidy, have no health problems, maintain healthy relationships and study hard. Lack of money, forced migration and dropping out of school to work in the fields are significant problems according to respondents in the collective interviews. Interviews from Poompohar revealed concern over the particular health hazards associated with work in the cotton fields. One respondent talked about the impact of the use of strong chemicals in the fields and the potentially negative impacts on girls' physical growth, the effect on their menstrual cycle, and the possibility of pre-marital sex as a result of their poor economic conditions and vulnerability to advances by cotton field owners. Another risk that emerged from the collective interviews was that of alcoholism. Being quite rampant in all sites barring Polur, it was a major concern for elders. Use of tobacco and alcohol had, according to them, increased among boys aged 14 and above. Collective interviews also focused on the changing culture, the influence of the media and the physical landscape of Patna, which poses security risks for girls in particular.

4. Services

This section seeks to examine the impact of policies, programmes and services on children's transitions and well-being from the perspectives of different stakeholders. It also explores the interplay between public, private and not-for-profit sectors and communities within these processes.

4.1 Education-related services

Pre-school

Pre-school emerged as an institution having an influence on children's lives. Children recalled their days in pre-school, while caregivers provided useful information on the quality of services provided therein. Interviews with the Older Cohort yielded information about how their teachers made them sing and play with toys and provided them with nutrition supplements. However, they also recalled the appalling conditions found in the pre-schools they had attended.

Caregivers also had interesting memories of their child having attended pre-school. although many did not place much emphasis on it and were often unsure as to whether their child had attended at all. Ramya's caregiver, from Poompuhar, responded to the question by saying, 'did you go? [asking the case-study child]. I am not sure, she must have gone sometimes'. There were mixed responses from caregivers regarding the quality of service in the pre-school.

Interviews with the caregivers tended to focus on the nature of their child's stay at pre-school, the dietary supplement received, the quality of teaching and the perceived benefits of enrolling their children. For example, when asked about the advantages of sending Rupesh to the *anganwadi*, his caregiver said:

It was neither harmful nor useful. Well you see, children are playful and noisy and naturally they create a racket and there is no government school to send the younger one to. It was impossible to have both of them at home – when together they were demanding my attention, always crying. I sent them there [to the *anganwadi*] so that I could attend to my housework. (Rupesh's caregiver, Katur)

For Rupesh's caregiver, pre-school served as an alternative means of childcare, enabling her to carry out her household work.

Similarly, Sravanthi's caregiver, from Katur, viewed the *anganwadi* as beneficial because it enabled parents to ensure their children were in a safe environment, stating: 'Yes madam, it is beneficial. We will go to work. They will take care of the children till 3 o'clock and they will not send the children outside. If we leave the children anywhere there is the fear of ponds, wells, so school is the better place.' Caregivers were generally satisfied with the quality of teaching in the school and reported having a good level of interaction with the teachers in the form of a meeting at least once every month.

However, not all caregivers were happy with the calibre of service provided in *anganwadis*. As, Vishnu's mother, from Poompuhar, said, 'we do not send our children there [to the *anganwadi*] because children suffered from dysentery after eating the flour [dietary supplement] supplied there'. Regarding the teaching, she adds, 'it is mediocre. Nothing much is taught here, a few little things like singing. Sometimes they play. Only to some extent can they write something on the slate. Nothing much....' Similarly, Revanth's mother from Katur, when asked whether she had anything to share about the functioning of the *anganwadi*, said:

What is there? She [the teacher in the *anganwadi*] doesn't know anything. She is not aware of the names of the children who are registered in the *anganwadi*. She does not attempt to go into the community and find out as to how many children are there who are eligible to go to the *anganwadi*. She comes to the *anganwadi*, stays for some time with the children who attend on that day and then leaves. Sometimes she does not come at all. Then only the ayah [attendant] manages. They do not make an attempt to get the children from the village. The ayah also does not come regularly. If she comes they [the teacher and the ayah] sit near the rock. They do not even look after the children. If she comes, that's it. They sit like that and both of them talk with each other. (Revanth's caregiver, Katur)

In Poompuhar, community members also expressed dissatisfaction with the functioning of the pre-school. They cited factors such as irregular supply of the nutrition supplement, the fact that teachers did not teach the required basics and that the children hardly knew how to write the Telugu alphabet. The same opinion was put forth during the collective interview with the Older Cohort caregivers, whose dissatisfaction with the *anganwadi* had, in some instances, led them to seek admission for their children in English-medium private schools.

The collective interview with the pre-school teachers in Poompohar also raised similar issues. They expressed concerns about the training that teachers received in running a pre-school, their general professional background, how best to provide maternal and child health care and lack of response from caregivers during their home visits. This demonstrates that pre-school teachers were also aware of the drawbacks and limitations of the current pre-school system.

Formal school

Interviews with children demonstrated the importance of school at both primary and secondary level. Many of them enjoyed their schooling, and the interviews yielded information on factors such as access and quality, as well as more general views on school-related issues.

Access

In Polur, schools were situated nearby, with most children travelling for between 10 and 15 minutes. Boys attended private school, while most of the girls attended the government-aided Urdu-medium school. Children from Patna tended to study in the ITDA-managed schools, usually residing in hostels.

In contrast, children in Katur walked or cycled a distance of 3km daily in order to attend the government secondary school situated in a nearby locality. For example, Triveni, the only Older Cohort child from Katur who attends school, cycles there on a bike provided by the Rural Development Trust, an NGO. Those children who walk or cycle long distances to reach school in Katur usually take the short cut which runs through thick bushes and trees and a deserted area where a canal is being dug by the government. For the children from Poompohar, free bus passes are provided by the government to travel long distances and attend school. As Sarada says: 'They [the government] are providing free bus passes for girls to travel for studies. We can study well but I feel I will not study because of the bus journey. I just cannot bear the travel... it is very sickening.' Clearly, issues of access have a significant impact on children's experiences of schooling.

Importantly, issues of access are particularly detrimental to girls' school attendance. For example, Older Cohort girls from Poompohar and Patna described the difficulties that they faced in accessing public transport to reach school on time. Girls from these communities have been given free bus passes to use on public vehicles. However, the conductors and drivers on these buses are not very cooperative. Difficulties they encountered include the bus not stopping to let them on, overcrowded buses, suffering verbal abuse from bus conductors and passengers for getting on the bus with large school bags, eve-teasing and generally reaching school late. One girl had actually joined a high school 10km from the village. After a couple of months she stopped going to school, the main reason being the long distance and difficulties experienced in getting there. Girls and boys from Patna who preferred to attend a better-quality private school had to travel 14km, passing seven streams flowing from the surrounding mountains. Risky events such as road blocks and water entering the buses generated fear in both the children and caregivers, such that parents stated that they waited anxiously until children returned home each evening. As a result, a girl from Patna was discontinued from their school and admitted into the local school. Girls from Polur stated that family members often accompanied them to school. Out of the three case-study children, one of the girls clad herself in a *burkha* (a long gown worn in public by Muslim women) while going to school in an attempt to ward off attention.

Quality

Interviews with the children revealed information about the calibre of teaching and the facilities provided in school, as well as the number of children in each class, which tended to be at a minimum of 40 students. According to one boy, the number of students in each classroom sometimes reached as many as 125. This caused significant disturbance during teaching, with children sitting in the back rows often being engaged in other activities during lessons. Vinay therefore makes an effort to ensure that he always sits in the first few rows so that he can concentrate during lessons. There were children who mentioned the prevalence of corporal punishment in school; others who enjoyed the relationship that they had with their teachers. Issues such as children urinating in open places on the school campus, lack of subject-specific teachers, lack of benches to sit on, an absence of toilets and lack of proper doors and windows also emerged during the interviews.

Corporal punishment was an almost universal experience among the children, although they often felt uncomfortable talking about it. This was in part related to the fact that they often felt that their teachers only beat them for their own good. For instance, Ramya, from Poompuhar, said:

I get hurt if teachers scold me. Sometimes they also beat us. Madam beats us more. She sometimes beats with stick. Everybody, all teachers, hold a stick whether they beat or not to discipline the students. They are also very naughty. If we do not complete our homework, she beats. She scolds if homework is not done. She beats if homework is not done. She beats if [we are] not regular to school. (Ramya, Older Cohort, Poompuhar)

The same girl goes on to explain the hardships that she faces in having to manage work in the cotton fields and regular school attendance. 'I feel very bad when teacher scolds me. I like to be regular to school, do home work, but I cannot do it all. It is difficult, but I have no choice but to do it.'

Group activities with the boys from Poompuhar revealed perceived problems with school facilities, such as a lack of benches on which to sit, abandoned toilets, classrooms without proper doors or windows, lack of adequate teaching and playing material, a poor teacher-to-student ratio and a lack of adequately trained teachers for individual subjects. Children also talked negatively about the '*vidya* volunteers' (untrained teachers appointed from the local community on a temporary basis), who they described as spending most of their time doing personal work. Children face a major problem when it rains as the classrooms are filled with water, which obstructs the teaching and learning process. In an ideal world, they felt that it would be nice to have a separate room for computer learning and general knowledge, and to have access to basic facilities like a TV, blackboard, radio and benches.

Some of the girls encountered specific problems in the services offered by school, such as a lack of water in the school that prevented them from using the toilet facilities. This was a problem that stretched across communities. For instance, a girl from Katur stated, 'all of us visit the bathroom like that only. Who will pour water when there is no water at all?'

Children from Patna and Katur were very much satisfied with their teachers. Govindh (Katur), when asked about how teachers clarify pupils' uncertainties, said, 'if you do not understand, you can stand and ask. They will tell like that, madam'. Harika, from Poompuhar, stated, 'our sir teaches nicely and in between he tells good things: we should get up early in the morning and brush the teeth and we must wash the hands with soap before eating'. In group activities, boys stated that teachers were capable of efficiently managing four classes at a time without causing any disturbance to studies. They made mention of blackboards fixed to the walls on all four sides of the classroom that enabled the teachers to engage two or three

classes at a time, giving one class work to do while they instructed another class orally. Children drew the different items present in the school, such as cupboards, windows, maps hanging on the wall and cooking utensils. Most of the children stated that they liked the meal served in the afternoon.

There appeared to be better facilities provided in the private schools. Indeed, in Polur there were separate sections for boys and girls. According to Rahmatulla, who studies in a private school,

The classes are good and nice with benches. Teachers are good and they teach well. If the books are not complete they tell to complete those. Otherwise during the inspection the school will get a bad name. Even the teachers and madam will be blamed that they are sitting idle and not doing anything. The other schools will blame our school and that's why they tell to complete the things. And nobody will join the school and the students will leave the school. (Rahmatulla, Older Cohort, Polur)

In individual interviews, children frequently made reference to the better quality of private schools in terms of infrastructure, teaching methods and learning material, and also in terms of having new and different subjects to study, such as those involving computers, and playgrounds equipped with a variety of play equipment. However, during observations it was found that in terms of infrastructure, some government schools (in Patna and Katur) were better served than the private schools. Children also spoke of differences in quality between private schools, when they have been moved from school to school by parents in search of better facilities and learning outcomes. For example, Aziz, who belonged to a better-off family and was the son of the local leader in Polur, had changed between two private schools to be in grade one at the present school. He remarked, 'All Saints school is good. This is good, that one was more dirty. All Saints is big.'

For the boys interviewed in Katur, an ideal school would be both clean and well ventilated, with toilet facilities for the girls, a well-equipped library, a limited number of students in each classroom, lush green trees and a hostel facility. For Older Cohort boys from Patna, it would resemble an educational establishment, and feature a spacious environment for prayer, a *pucca* (concrete) building, a wall around the school grounds and fans in the classroom and toilets. Expectations with regard to these amenities were almost the same in all the sites and between both girls and boys. Girls were more particular about the toilet facilities and indicated that girls coming to school from neighbouring and distant villages were frequently absent from school for two to three days during menstruation, as there are no toilet facilities in the school.

The importance of education

Both girls and boys were very communicative and articulate in expressing their views relating to educational issues. Talking about the importance of education, Vinay from Patna said:

In childhood days we do not have the correct idea about the importance of education. When the class teacher comes she takes classes. If we do not have interest, we do not listen. Sometimes students also crack jokes silently. But in the secondary school they told us about the importance of education, my foundation was built there. Now I know the value of education. But in the primary school I did not know that value. (Vinay, Older Cohort, Patna)

A feeling that education is essential for pursuing certain occupations was voiced by Rahmatulla from Polur, who said, 'we should study to become doctor or drive the planes, to work in the office. Should work in well-established office. Can become an engineer, police.

We should study. If we want to become something then we have to study'. Children also expressed their views about the subjects they liked the most, their favourite teachers and the games that they liked to play.

Issues specific to residential schools

Most case-study children from Patna who attend school live in residential schools, which had a profound impact on their experiences.

Issues such as rice not being cooked properly and a lack of water supply were mentioned by the children as important factors in this educational context. Preethi, from Patna, said:

Facilities are good but there is no water – that is why we go out to the stream. After answering the calls of nature, we take a bath, cover ourselves with clothes and come back before it is bright. We take out the sand there, make a ditch and store water. After all the buffaloes are taken away, we take a bath. (Preethi, Older Cohort, Patna)

Caregiver's perspectives

Caregivers' responses serve as an interesting complement to the children's views expressed above about the nature and quality of services. These views will be considered in the context of each research site.

Caregivers from Polur felt that it was important for a teacher to teach well and communicate adequately with the students. All said that their children were also studying for school or learning Arabic in the evenings, as is common in some Muslim communities.

In Patna, caregivers expressed a greater concern for the children's education. Parents felt that a private school was better in terms of the food provided, discipline and overall child development. Children were encouraged to write the entrance exam for admission into such a school. Timely use of opportunities provided by the government was also reflected in the discussion with caregivers in this site. For instance, in explaining why she had sent her daughter to a residential ITDA school in response to her highly irregular attendance of formal school, Preethi's caregiver said:

If we do not use the opportunities provided by the government, it becomes difficult; we need food when we feel hungry, isn't it? But it is not just the food; it is opportunities for education also. We must use these and read when we have an opportunity. If we read well in this age, in future, you may have better opportunities. If you discontinue now, what will you do? Then you cannot go anywhere... You cannot go as a coolie [labourer] also. (Preethi's caregiver, Patna)

Preethi's caregiver, who has admitted her daughter in an ITDA-aided school, is quite content with the amenities provided there. 'They are giving all. As government is providing, we should take. We should not use our money. It will not be good.' School and family engagement appeared to be strong in this site. Caregivers talked about their regular visits to the school, during which they enquired about their children's performance.

Caregivers from Katur gave more information about their children's performance in secondary school. Time spent at school, teachers' attitudes towards parents, school and family engagement and children's performance were the focus of the interviews. According to caregivers, the children were at school from 8.30am to 6.00pm on average, depending on the classes for the day. This included travel to and from the school, which is at a distance of 3km from the village. Most of the caregivers were happy with the response teachers gave

them during their visit to the school. As Prasad's caregiver puts it, 'they will discuss, madam; they don't grumble, madam. Sir will say, "you wait for some time. I am teaching the students now; after that I will talk about the student" to us'. In most cases, either the father or the mother visited the school at least twice a year to enquire about their child's performance. As Prasad's caregiver said, 'here [Katur], we used to go twice in a month, madam. Now I send my husband to Ragulpadu [a place 3km away from Katur where Prasad studies in the government higher secondary school] as it is far from here, madam. I feel like going every month'.

In Poompuhar, caregivers were not forthcoming about their opinions of the quality of teaching in the school. However, Subbaiah's caregiver said, 'Now there are voluntary teachers in the school and they are from the village itself. They go to the fields during school time. Then what will they teach when they themselves are busy with their work'. They were unhappy with the lack of basic amenities in the school. Mohan's caregiver said, 'there is no urinal [toilet] in the school for ladies, madams. No bathroom in the school. You say they teach [sarcastically]. There is no drop of water to drink'. She later explained that 'if they have to urinate they have to go around the village'. Mohan's caregiver felt that teachers should 'teach well, be strict and have fear. Children should be instructed to obey mother. Should be systematic and take bath daily and should be well dressed'. She also explained the challenges faced by children who have to go to school while also helping with the household and agricultural work: 'He [Mohan] says, once you tell me to study, and another time you will tell me to go to the field, how will I study, sirs will scold me. His father tells him to go to the field on Sundays.'

Interviews in Polur and Patna also revealed caregivers' preference for private school over government school, in light of the perceived higher quality of education. According to Vishnu's caregiver, who has enrolled her son in a private primary school, 'he is gaining knowledge there. Teachers come regularly. Otherwise they can be removed from the job'. On the other hand, talking about the midday meal provided in the government primary school where one of her children studied, Rahul's caregiver said:

They provide food well, madam. Now it is fine, madam. Previous sir [cook] was a drunkard. The new cook does well, the rice, dhal, sambar [thick soup made of lentils], he cooks well. If the food is not good they prepare the food again. The teachers will taste the food and only if it is good will they ask the cook to serve the children. (Rahul's caregiver, Katur)

While talking about family–school engagement, Rahul's caregiver added:

Once in 15 days, they [the school] arrange meetings, madam. You have to purchase books, good shirts, etc. If they [the children] have a running nose they will not mistreat the children but allow them into the school. They tell the parents to keep the children clean while sending them to school. They arrange for interactions between parents and teachers in such a way. (Rahul's caregiver, Katur)

Talking about the required qualities of a teacher, Rupesh's caregiver said:

A teacher must be a good man and the students ought to listen to what the teacher says and in case the children are, say, a bit naughty, the teacher ought to have patience. After all, they are kids and there should be a good rapport between the teachers and the students. Both should be good. If sometimes a child may be inattentive, the teacher should not beat or punish unnecessarily because that will lead to unnecessary problems. If both are ok the learning process becomes easy. (Rupesh's caregiver, Katur)

In considering family–school engagement, caregivers from Patna stated that teachers and caregivers had good interactions and that teachers showed keen interest in the children’s welfare. Rupesh’s caregiver said:

Once I was asked to come to school and was told to send my son to school regularly because I had taken him along with me and he missed school for eight days. I was told not to take him along with me and instead leave him behind in the company of his avva [grandmother]. It was okay if he missed school for eight days but it might make him forget his lessons and it would be difficult for him to pick up his missed lessons.
(Rupesh’s caregiver, Katur)

All the case-study children in Polur attend a private school, while those in Patna attend ITDA-run or aided schools. They are happy and satisfied with the services provided in the ITDA-run schools. Caregivers are also happy with the facilities provided in the ITDA-run residential school. It was usually the father who visited their children regularly and enquired after their academic and general welfare. Yaswanth’s caregiver said:

They [the government] will provide, we need not spend. The children are even taken to the hospital if they suffer from fever. We need not spend any money. They will provide everything. It’s during the 50-day summer vacation, when the children come home from the hostel that we have to spend towards the various needs of the children. During the remaining period they give everything for the children. (Yaswanth’s caregiver, Patna)

4.2 Other services

There is access to the public distribution system in all four sites. The government provides rice, kerosene and sugar at subsidised rates to families with low economic status. There is also water and electricity in all four sites, though the power supply is erratic at times. Government schemes, such as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, Indira Kranthi Pathakam (a government-sponsored housing programme), cash transfer in self-help groups for women, the drought-prone area programme, etc., are in operation in the rural and tribal areas.

4.3 Health services

There is no formal health service in the rural sites. The community members visit the doctors in the nearby *mandal* headquarter or the town for treatment in case of emergencies. Traditional healing continues and there is an auxiliary nurse-midwife who visits the homes of pregnant and nursing mothers and distributes essential medicines. Pre-school teachers regularly monitor the height and weight of children below 3 years of age, conducting home visits and providing health education during periodic meetings with new mothers. In Polur, an urban site, there is a government dispensary, a government maternity hospital and a number of private medical clinics. While the residents visit these government services regularly, private practitioners are frequently consulted due to a lack of satisfaction with the services offered by government health programmes. In Patna, there is an ITDA-managed health centre with which community members seemed to be quite satisfied.

5. Implications for further research and policy

A quick analysis of the data suggests that the quality of children's lives revolve around their access to services which play a central role in shaping their 'well-being'. Transitions related to school are affected by the quality of and access to services, which in turn determine the trajectories that these children go through.

5.1 Pre-school

Pre-schools or *anganwadis* are an important institution in children's lives. Children talked fondly of their time there, and teachers from primary schools often felt that children who entered formal school via pre-school adjusted more easily to the new environment compared to those who enrol straight from home. It appears that they also learn faster and perform better. Caregivers also value the service in terms of providing a place for their children to stay and play while they are away on their farms or engaged in paid labour. Children less than three years of age are also often sent along with their siblings to the *anganwadi*. However, there is a general feeling of dissatisfaction about the functioning of *anganwadis* across the four sites. The following points should be of particular concern for policymakers:

- Physical space in pre-schools is not usually child-friendly, often consisting of small purpose-built rooms that are old, dark and poorly maintained. In other cases, *anganwadis* are located in other buildings, such as the *panchayat* office, often disturbing the ordinary function of the building.
- Play equipment is often underused. The *anganwadis* have been provided with toys and other learning materials, but these tend to be tucked carefully into cupboards and kept under lock and key so that they do not get 'spoilt'.
- The regularity of teacher attendance was an important issue raised by caregivers. It was reported and also observed that teachers were often engaged in various other activities in order to generate additional income, leaving responsibility for the centres to the helpers.
- Despite provision of ready-made manuals and periodical training to teachers, the 'play way' method of teaching was not normally implemented. Caregivers often talked about the absence of this educational component at the centre. The common concern was that the children do not learn anything at the *pindi badi* (the school that provides the flour (the nutrition supplement)). *Anganwadis* are therefore viewed as centres for nutritional supplementation, rather than as pre-schools in the true sense.
- There are a lack of close links between the local pre-school and local primary school. In most cases across the sites, it appeared that the *anganwadis* functioned in isolation, with little interaction between the pre-school and primary school teachers. A few teachers mentioned that they facilitate the admission of pre-school children into the primary school on attaining the prescribed age, but this was unusual.
- Teaching of the Telugu alphabet in a Muslim-dominated locality where Urdu is the common language may generate confusion.

- The attitude of the teachers and the *ayah* (helper) are often not child-friendly. This was often the result of teachers viewing their role as disciplinary: to keep the children from wandering the streets while their parents were absent.
- The location of the *anganwadi* seems to have a direct relation to its functioning. In cases where the *anganwadi* was located in the premises of the primary school, it was found that the centre performed better, functioned more regularly and had more children attending than other centres. The older siblings were relieved of the responsibility of having to look after their younger brothers and sisters at home, since they could supervise them while at school. This arrangement also established a link between pre-school and primary school.
- Kindergarten classes at private schools seem to be a threat to the *anganwadis*, particularly in the semi-urban areas where private primary school education is not very expensive. As these schools admit children as young as 3 and focus on teaching the alphabets, numeracy and rhymes, caregivers prefer these schools to the *anganwadis*. Children attending these schools, it appears, move to the government school when they are 5, which is the prescribed age for Grade 1. Making attendance at/admission into an *anganwadi* mandatory for admission into the government primary school seems to be useful in addressing these issues.

5.2 Primary school/ high school

- There is a lack of teachers, basic amenities and adequate infrastructure. An insufficient number of teachers, particularly at the primary school level, often resulted in children of different grades sitting together in the same room and being taught by one teacher. In high school, lack of teachers resulted in more focus on grade ten, as these children are required to appear for the public examinations that determine the school assessment. As a result, other classes receive less attention.
- The infrastructure in most government schools needs attention. Those schools covered under the SSA fare well in this regard. Most schools lack even basic infrastructure, such as desks, and children are therefore required to sit on the floor.
- The use of corporal punishment is a cause for concern for both children and caregivers in terms of its effect on the children's psyche and well-being. Children attending both government and private schools have reported the use of corporal punishment. It is less prevalent (almost absent) in the tribal schools run by the ITDA and the tribal welfare department.
- A large student-teacher ratio in certain schools results in a reduction in the attention teachers are able to give to individual students. This places slow learners at a particular disadvantage, leading to further drops in self confidence with knock-on effects on their well-being. This contributes to school drop-out and poor performance.
- Government schools are being looked upon as being of 'poor quality' when compared to private schools, in spite of having better qualified and highly trained teachers.
- Distance to high school is often a factor that discourages children from continuing their education. Free bus passes have been provided to children to address this issue. However, not all schools are connected by buses, and where they are, many other factors hinder the effective use of this service, particularly for girls. The scheduled bus trips in some cases do not match the school timings and children often reach school late. Poor treatment by the conductors, drivers and other

passengers often causes hardship to young children. These children are denounced as 'free pass holders' and their big school bags are the subject of much complaint. Eve-teasing is yet another issue that these children endure. Life skills education at school, which is planned but often not a priority, could help children handle these issues and decrease the likelihood of them resulting in drop-out. Interventions aimed at changing the behaviour and attitudes of drivers and conductors could also be implemented.

- The challenges faced by children trying to balance household work and school are particularly difficult, and often have a significant impact on their subjective well-being. Older children engaged in farm work often miss school for long periods during the peak agricultural season and find it difficult then to return. A rearrangement of the school schedule in these areas could help children to balance these responsibilities.
- A good number of children drop out of school at Grades 8 and 9 and enter the workforce. More boys than girls enter waged labour.
- Preference for private schools, particularly at the primary level, is influenced by factors such as a perceived better-quality education and English as the medium of instruction. English-medium government high schools form a small percentage of total schools, and accessing them can therefore be difficult.
- Children in government residential schools perform better than those in day schools. This is particularly true of children staying in tribal hostels. Having residential teachers in all hostels and increasing access to hostels may improve achievement. The budgetary allocations and difference in per capita investment in children in various types of schools need reviewing.

Annex 1: School transitions for the Older Cohort

Category 1: Government Primary School → Government Secondary Day School

Boys	Quintiles (consumption)	Girls	Quintiles (consumption)
1 Poompohar–Subbaiah	(3)	1 Poompohar–Harika	(4)
2 Poompohar–Ranadeep	(3)	2 Poompohar–Ramya	(5)
3 Patna–Yaswanth	(1)	3 Poompohar–Sarada	(1)
4 Katur–Govindh	(3)	4 Katur–Triveni	(2)
5 Katur–Prasad	(5)	5 Polur–Kareena	(5)
6 Polur–Rahmatulla	(4)	6 Polur–Sania	(2)
		7 Polur–Ameena	(4)
6 Members		7 Members	

Category 2: Government Primary School → Government Secondary Hostel

Boys	Quintiles (consumption)	Girls	Quintiles (consumption)
1 Patna–Rajesh	(1)	1 Patna–Keerthi	(1)
		2 Patna–Preethi	(2)
1 Member		2 Members	

Category 3: Private Primary → Private Secondary

Boys	Quintiles (consumption)	Girls	Quintiles (consumption)
1 Polur–Saifuddin	(4)	1 Patna–Santhi	(5)
1 Member		1 Member	

Category 4: Government Primary / Secondary → Drop-out

Boys	Quintiles (consumption)	Girls	Quintiles (consumption)
1 Poompohar–Moha	(2)	1 Katur–Latha	(3)
1 Member		1 Member	

Category 5: Government Primary / Secondary → Work (wage)

Boys	Quintiles (consumption)	Girls	Quintiles (consumption)
1 Katur–Revanth	(4)	1 Katur–Bhavana	(5)
2 Polur–Akshay Khan	(2)		
2 Members		1 Member	

Category 6: Private Primary → Government Secondary

Boys	Quintiles (consumption)	Girls	Quintiles (consumption)
1 Patna–Vinay	(3)	-	
1 Member		-	

Annex 2: School transitions for the Younger Cohort

Category 1: Home to Government Pre-school → Government Primary School

Boys	Quintiles (consumption)	Girls	Quintiles (consumption)
1 Poompohar–Manoj	(3)	1 Poompohar–Tejaswini	(2)
2 Patna–Krishna	(1)	2 Poompohar–Shanmuka priya	(4)
3 Patna–Nagaraju	(1)	3 Patna–Saroja	(1)
4 Katur–Rahul	(1)	4 Katur–Sravanthi	(2)
5 Katur–Govind	(2)	5 Polur–Alisha	(4)
6 Katur–Rupesh	(4)	6 Polur–Muntaj	(3)
6 Members		6 Members	

Category 2: Home to Private School (Lower Kindergarten, Upper Kindergarten, Day scholar / hostel)

Boys	Quintiles (consumption)	Girls	Quintiles (consumption)
1 Patna–Srikanth	(5)	1 Katur–Sahithi	(3)
2 Polur–Aziz	(3)	2 Polur–Dilshad	(5)
3 Polur–Roshan	(3)		
4 Polur–Anwar	(5)		
4 Members		2 Members	

Category 3: Home to Government Pre-school → Private School (Hostel and Day)

Boys	Quintiles (consumption)	Girls	Quintiles (consumption)
1 Poompohar–Vishnu	(4)	1 Poompohar–Likitha	(3)
2 Poompohar–Revanth	(4)	2 Patna–Anita	(2)
2 Members		2 Members	

Category 4: Home to Government Pre-school → Government Hostel

Boys	Quintiles (consumption)	Girls	Quintiles (consumption)
-		1 Patna–Chandani	(1)
-		1 Member	

Category 5: Home to Government Pre-school → (Still in Pre-school)

Boys	Quintiles (consumption)	Girls	Quintiles (consumption)
-		1 Katur–Jayanthi	(3)
-		1 Member	

Annex 3: Children's perspectives on well-being

Indicators of a child who is doing well

	Physical	Social	Economic	Psychological/ emotional	Education	Cultural
Boys Katur	He has nice, neat hair; powders his face; has a daily bath; wears nice, clean clothes; his eyes and ears are fine; eats good food	He respects his elders; is disciplined; interacts well with others; has no bad habits; does all the household work	He eats good food, including fruit, vegetables, chocolate and biscuits; eats food that has not gone off; has lots of money; his family have agricultural lands; he goes to work	-	He goes to school regularly; studies well; interacts well with his classmates; wears a clean uniform; is disciplined in school	He prays before going to school
Girls Katur	She has a daily bath; is clean and neat; is beautiful; has a fair complexion and paints her nails; dresses well; wears bangles, necklace and a <i>bindi</i> ; has good health	She is nice; is innocent; behaves well; is good hearted; goes out accompanied and only with her parents' permission; talks nicely; is enthusiastic; is helpful and plays with other children; respects her elders; interacts well with others; lends money; shares food and stationery items; is always smiling; does not gossip; does all the household work	She gives money to others; wears jewellery	She does not get angry; is always happy and smiling	She is helpful to her classmates; shares her belongings	She goes out only after asking her parents for permission
Boys Polur	He wears clean clothes; washes with soap daily; does not fall sick often	He does not fight with others; interacts well with everybody; does not use bad language; obeys and respects his teachers; gets groceries from the shop; plays nicely; talks pleasantly with others; helps his mother and father at home	-	-	He does <i>namaz</i> (prayer) at school; goes to <i>Madarsa</i> school (Islamic school); completes his daily homework; is always first in the class; shares his notebook; respects teachers; strives to maintain the reputation of the school	He prays regularly at school, home and the mosque
Girls Polur	She brushes her teeth and washes her face; is always dressed in a <i>burkha</i> ; wears a <i>kurtha</i> (long top) and <i>pyjamas</i> (trousers), always with a belt; is very neat; covers her head with <i>chunni</i> (the upper cloth of her dress). All these indicate that she follows the religious code	She helps her mother; respects her elders; keeps the house neat and sweeps it thoroughly; does not steal; does not talk to boys; is very simple; does not beat others; has close interactions with elders and younger people	-	-	She goes to school regularly ; studies well; comes first or second in her class	She does <i>namaz</i> (prayer) routinely; wears a <i>burkha</i> ; covers her face

	Physical	Social	Economic	Psychological/ emotional	Education	Cultural
Boys Poompuhar	He has a bright complexion; combs his hair with plenty of oil; wears shoes; has good health; eats nutritious food; is hygienic	He is a kind person; interacts well with everybody; is brave; is very active	He is rich; wears good clothes	He is always happy and laughing	He studies well; comes first in his class; goes to school regularly	-
Girls Poompuhar	She is attractive and pleasant; wears colourful, clean clothes; is healthy	She is her parents' only daughter; is always at home (including during vacations); stays at home happily; is well-behaved and has a good character	She has television, radio, fan, etc., at home; lives in a spacious house; her family are financially stable	She is always happy and laughing; lives with her parents; does not go to work	She goes to school regularly	-
Boys Patna	He wears good clothes; bathes every day; combs his hair neatly; cuts his nails regularly on Sundays; looks clean and healthy; removes wax from his ears regularly; washes his hands and feet before eating food	He is well-behaved and obedient; obeys elders; is friendly; helps with household work; has parental guidance; has a competitive nature; reads during his leisure time	-	-	He goes to school regularly; is willing to study in a group (commonly referred to among students as combined studies); he is very outgoing; he studies well and achieves good grades	He prays and visits temple/church with his family
Girls Patna	She is clean; wears good, neat, ironed clothes; keeps her belongings, home and the surrounding environment very clean	She is helpful; shares her books, food and other things; interacts well with everyone; has good parents; is well-mannered and cooperative; respects her elders and teachers; obeys her parents; is friendly; is very consoling; helps disabled people and those in need	She eats nutritious food, biscuits and chocolates	Her parents take good care of their children and the family live peacefully and with pleasure	She is a good student, enjoys studying and finishes her homework on time; answers all the questions; helps others with their queries; has good handwriting and reads good books; keeps her school belongings clean and neat and has all the stationery ready; she wears a clean uniform; the teachers like her very much;	-

Indicators of a child who is not doing well

	Physical	Social	Economic	Psychological / emotional	Education	Cultural
Boys Katur	He does not wash his hands and legs; does not bathe or comb his hair; wears torn clothes; is very dirty; he smells and no-one likes to sit next to him; eats bad food; eats without washing his hands; smokes <i>beedis</i> (hand-rolled cigarettes); plays in dirty water; is dirty; has diseases such as polio and leprosy; does not have immunisations; has paralysis of the legs; has no parents	He lives in a dirty, smelly environment; has bad habits	He has no money; wears torn clothes; does not eat good food; is in difficult circumstances	-	He does not go to school	-
Girls Katur	She does not wear a half sari; wears slippers; paints her fingernails; does not wear a <i>bindi</i> ; has short, red hair; wears a <i>salwar kameez</i> (dress worn by young girls)	She does not talk nicely; is very headstrong; is always angry; is very proud; is irritable; does not help anyone or talk to anyone; does not do any household work; does not respect her elders; goes out alone; goes to the cinema; is fearless; has bad habits	She has money but does not help others who are in need	She is always irritable and is unkind	She always cries when going to school; does not talk to anyone at school	-
Boys Polur	He is dirty	He has bad habits; does not take any notice of his mother; tricks his mother; steals money from home; shouts and beats others; does not respect his teachers; smokes cigarettes; is always roaming outdoors	-	-	He does not go to school; does not mind even when the teacher beats him; always fails; does not respect his teachers; smokes while in school	He does not pray; does not attend <i>Madarsa</i> school (Islamic school)
Girls Polur	She does not comb her hair or brush her teeth; wears dirty clothes; her hands and legs are dirty; she roams on the street	She does not interact well with others, behave well or help her mother; always sits outside on the road; steals; always talks to boys and roams on the street with boys on bikes; gives her bag to boys to carry; calls people names	-	-	-	She does not do <i>namaz</i> (prayer)
Boys Poempuhar	He wears torn and dirty clothes; has various diseases; has unkempt hair and nasal discharge; has no shoes; smells bad	He is arrogant	He is poor; does not have enough food; does heavy work	He is always crying and moody; is scared of everything	He is a bad student; does not go to school regularly	-
Girls Poempuhar	She has uncombed hair; has dirty clothes; has poor health; has wounds on her body	She stays at home on her own; says bad things about her elders and other people; roams on the street; fights people; blames and scolds others	She works both in the fields and at home; works in the cotton fields; lives in an overcrowded, hut-like house; has no TV or fan at home; does not have enough food or enough water to grow crops; has a large family; works too much	She is unhappy; laughs for no reason	She does not go to school regularly	-

	Physical	Social	Economic	Psychological / emotional	Education	Cultural
Boys Patna	He has discharge from the ears and nose; is very unhygienic; does not comb his hair or brush his teeth; smells bad; suffers from skin diseases; does not cut his hair or nails regularly	He behaves badly; hangs out with girls; chews <i>gutka</i> (a sort of tobacco available in small packs); is addicted; is lazy and stubborn; is always playing and roaming; tells lies; quarrels and fights with others; steals; is disruptive in class; is scared of talking to others because he does not go to school regularly	He has little money	-	He is behind in his studies; plays truant from school; roams the streets; is always playing; does not go to school regularly; drops out of school	-
Girls Patna	She is unhygienic; does not wear uniform or footwear; has torn clothes; does heavy work at home	She does not know how to respect her elders; behaves badly; speaks loudly; her parents are not good or hardworking; she does not have friends; she is deviant; she does all the work; she is supported by a priest at a temple/ashram etc. (this refers to practices like <i>matamma</i> , <i>jogini</i> etc., where young girls are 'married off' to god)	She works outside home; her parents do not take care of her; she does not have enough money or food; has a large family	She is always sad; feels very anxious; does not have parents; her mother is ill	She does not go to school; works outside; if she does go to school, she has no time to read; she does not go to school regularly; she does not do well in her studies; she does not want to study	-

THE AUTHORS

Professor Uma Vennam has an MA in social work specialising in Urban and Rural Community Development from Tata Institute of Social Sciences Bombay, and holds a PhD from the University of East Anglia, Norwich, England. She is currently a professor of social work at SMPVV. She has been involved in various projects dealing with poverty alleviation, rural livelihoods, SLMF, poverty and HIV/AIDS, trafficking in women and children, child labour and Aids Prevention Education Programme (APEP) for school children with international agencies including the World Bank, DFID and UNICEF. Her research interests focus on rural livelihoods, monitoring and evaluation of poverty alleviation. She is the lead qualitative researcher for Young Lives in India

Anuradha Komanduri has a masters degree in social work specialising in medical and psychiatric social work and holds a PhD in Child Mental Health from Sri Padmavathi Mahila Visvavidyalayam (Tirupati Women's University). She is the Assistant Qualitative Researcher for Young Lives India.

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