

International Longitudinal Research on Childhood Poverty:

Practical Guidelines and Lessons Learned from Young Lives

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Young Lives 
An International Study of Childhood Poverty

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Aconyms

CPM	Coloured Progressive Matrices Test
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DFID	Department for International Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LSMS	Living Standards and Measurement Survey
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SC UK	Save the Children UK
SDQ	Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire
SRQ-20	Self-Reporting Questionnaire
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation

Introduction

Young Lives: *An International Study of Childhood Poverty* is an innovative research and advocacy project investigating the nature of childhood poverty over time in selected developing countries.

- Research activities include collecting data on a set of core child welfare outcomes and their determinants, and monitoring changes in the policy environment, in order to explore the links between the policy environment and outcomes for children.
- Advocacy activities include organising media coverage, and promoting links between researchers, government and civil society to ensure effective dissemination and use of the findings.

By mid-2003, the project had completed the first round of data collection, developed guidelines for policy monitoring, and implemented a range of dissemination and advocacy-related activities.

One of the objectives of Young Lives is to develop a replicable and relatively low-cost methodology that can be used to study childhood poverty over time. The main purpose of this document is, therefore, to provide guidance for developing country government, NGO and research professionals interested in conducting similar research and advocacy work on childhood poverty. It outlines the approach taken by Young Lives, drawing on experience and lessons learned to highlight important issues to consider. It does not provide detailed information about longitudinal studies or research techniques, which is available in other texts. The justification documents (See Documents 6 and 7), which explain the inclusion and structure of questions in the core questionnaires, contain a range of references to literature covering issues such as working with children, longitudinal studies, and measuring child and maternal health.

The document is organised as follows:

- Section 1: summarises the **Background** to the Young Lives project.
- Section 2: describes the project **Methodology and tools** and how these were developed.
- Section 3: provides practical guidance on **Organisation and management** of this type of project.
- Section 4: provides practical guidance on **Data management and analysis**.
- Section 5: describes the Young Lives approach to **Dissemination and advocacy**.

Throughout this document, there are references to various Young Lives reference materials. These can be found on the CD version of the Guidelines (ISBN 1-904427-08-1), or on the Young Lives website (www.younglives.org.uk). All the documents are numbered and are referred to by number in the text (e.g. 'See Document 5').

In September 2003, Young Lives published the Preliminary Country Reports. They are available on CD (ISBN 1-904427-09-X) and on the Young Lives website.

Young Lives has a working paper series and these papers can also be downloaded from the website.

If you are unable to access the required documents, please contact younglives@younglives.org.uk

I. Background

What are the objectives of the Young Lives project?

Young Lives is an innovative long-term project investigating the nature of childhood poverty in selected developing countries. The purpose of the project is to improve our understanding of the causes and consequences of childhood poverty. The project's findings will be used to inform the development of future policy to alleviate childhood poverty and to ensure the more effective targeting of child welfare interventions.

The objectives of Young Lives are:

- To produce good quality long-term data about the lives of children growing up in poverty.
- To trace linkages between key policy changes and child welfare.
- To inform and respond to the needs of policy makers, planners and other stakeholders.

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) funded the first three-year phase of the project.

Why focus on childhood poverty?

Poverty in childhood is a serious problem because:

- **Childhood poverty has significant long-term effects** – Childhood malnutrition can impair long-term physical and mental development and capacity to learn; girls who are under-nourished in childhood are more likely to have low birth weight babies and to experience complications or die during childbirth; children who miss formal education may not get another opportunity to develop key skills and knowledge.
- **Children suffer most from the adverse effects of family poverty** – In many countries, poverty is concentrated among families with children, and children in poor families are more likely to experience hunger, disease, violence and social stigma than children in better-off families. These children are more likely to take on income generating, domestic and child care responsibilities at a young age.
- **Children living in poverty often stay poor as they grow up** – Today's poor children are more likely to become tomorrow's poor parents, and their children, in turn, are at greater risk of living in poverty.

Where is the project being conducted?

Young Lives is being conducted in Peru, Vietnam, Ethiopia and India (Andhra Pradesh state). These countries were selected in order to illustrate the effects of a range of policy, social and economic issues on childhood poverty and well-being. These issues include: economic liberalisation, indebtedness and debt relief, conflict and natural disasters, and inequality. Government and civil society commitment to poverty reduction, and the existence of institutions with capacity to undertake this research were also important factors. The participating countries also reflect a range of geographical, social and cultural contexts.

Who is conducting the project?

Young Lives involves collaboration between academic and NGO partners in each of the four countries, supported by Save the Children (SC UK) and a consortium of UK and South African academic institutions. Young Lives has a wide range of partners, reflecting the diverse expertise and skills required for this type of project, including in:

- **Ethiopia** – Ethiopian Development Research Institute, Addis Ababa University, and SC UK Addis Ababa.
- **India** – Centre for Economic and Social Studies (CESS), and SC UK Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh.
- **Peru** – Instituto de Investigación Nutricional (IIN), Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo (GRADE), and SC UK Lima.
- **Vietnam** – Research and Training Centre for Community Development (RTCCD), Government of Vietnam Statistical Office, and SC UK Hanoi.
- **UK** – University of Reading, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, South Bank University, Institute of Development Studies at Sussex University, and SC UK.
- **South Africa** – South African Medical Research Council.

What does the project involve?

Data collection

The project is collecting data about children and about the communities in which they live:

- **Children** – Young Lives will follow 8000 ‘index’ children and their households (2000 in each of the four countries) for 15 years. The first round of data collection was completed in 2002 when these index children were 1 year of age. Further rounds of data collection will follow up these children every 3 or 4 years, when they are 4, 8, 11 and 14 years of age. During this first round of data collection, the project also collected data from 1000 8-year-old children and their households, to provide a basis for comparison with the index children when they reach the age of 8. It also allowed methods of collecting data from older children to be piloted.
- **Community** – Young Lives is also collecting information about the social, economic and environmental context in each community site during each round of data collection.

Policy monitoring

The project established a policy monitoring system in each country that involves tracking policy changes in different sectors over time. This information will be used to explore the links between the policy environment and outcomes for children.

Dissemination and Advocacy

The project is conducting a range of dissemination and advocacy activities. These activities have a number of aims, including promoting links with researchers, government and civil society, raising awareness of childhood poverty and ensuring the effective dissemination and use of the findings.

Why is Young Lives an innovative project?

Specific factors that make Young Lives a unique and important study are:

- It takes a comprehensive approach to assessing children's well-being – Existing information about children's well-being is fragmented, for example, there is often good data about the health status of children, but rarely information giving the overall picture. Standard survey data often focuses on things that are easy to measure, such as school attendance or weight for age, and misses less tangible issues that are important to children, such as feeling secure. Working with a broad understanding of children's well-being, Young Lives will provide information both about subjective outcomes, such as children's perspectives on their well-being, as well as objective outcomes, such as health, nutrition and education.
- It takes a comprehensive approach to assessing the determinants of children's well-being – Young Lives takes a broad approach to poverty, assessing a range of factors that affect children's well-being, such as the livelihoods of the households in which they live, access to basic services such as health and education, and social relationships and networks, in addition to traditional economic indicators such as assets.
- It links changes in policy with changes in child well-being – Most research does not link the situation of children with the wider national policy context. The Young Lives approach monitors key aspects of the social and economic policy environment, and explores the ways in which policy affects children and their households and communities. It will provide information to help analyse the impact, for example, of government poverty alleviation measures and their effectiveness in reaching the poorest children and their families.
- It offers the potential for international comparison of the situation of children living in poverty – Use of the standard research tools – the 'core' household and child questionnaires developed by Young Lives – will facilitate comparison between countries.
- It involves children themselves as key informants – The participation of children in research has been limited and few studies have sought the views of children, particularly younger children, about their lives. By interviewing children themselves, the Young Lives approach will provide an understanding of how children of different ages perceive their own well-being.
- It focuses on a neglected age group – The health and well-being of children under the age of five and of adolescents has received much attention, but few studies have looked at what happens to children in between. Information on child well-being also tends to focus on children as a whole and does not show differences between boys and girls or older and younger children. Young Lives will provide disaggregated data about the ways in which poverty affects different groups of children.

2. Methodology and Tools

Developing the Conceptual Framework

An initial conceptual framework (see Document 1) was developed that underpins the design of the project. It links the 'macro' (policy context) and the 'micro' (community and household context). Key steps in developing the framework were:

- Reviewing the literature on childhood poverty and existing data sets.
- Identifying outcomes of interest and developing flow charts of explanatory variables (factors determining or influencing these outcomes).
- Identifying key themes that will provide the focus for analysis and reporting (Young Lives refers to these themes as 'storylines').

The conceptual framework will be reviewed prior to the beginning of the second phase of Young Lives.

Reviewing the literature and existing data sets

Practical points

- The literature review is critical and should be done at an early stage. A thorough review of the international and national literature provides the context for the design of the project overall and of the specific tools. This helps to identify outcome and explanatory variables. It also helps to avoid the design being driven by particular interests.
- Use the international literature references in the Young Lives justification documents (See documents 6 and 7) as a starting point.
- Conduct a national literature review. In one country, Young Lives found the literature review to be a very useful process, as information about poverty and children was scattered across many different documents. Pulling it together helped to show the bigger picture and to reveal important gaps in knowledge.
- Relevant country information helps to identify sites. For example, one of the Young Lives countries used poverty mapping conducted by the World Bank to help select study sites. Country information also helps to identify issues for further analysis, and provides a context for reports and a basis for comparison with your results.
- A good national literature review can also be a valuable advocacy tool. The Young Lives countries have used the literature review to raise awareness during initial meetings with policy makers and other important stakeholders. Consider updating the national literature review on a regular basis. This could be done every 6 months, at the same time as reviewing changes in the policy environment.
- Review existing data (e.g. from the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) and Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS)). Questions in these surveys may be useful, as they may illustrate how certain questions can be expressed in the local language. In addition, for your project to have credibility, it is important to ensure consistency with

other available data sources. You can use other data to reinforce your findings or, if they are not consistent, you can look for reasons to explain any differences.

BOX 1: SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR A NATIONAL REVIEW

- National surveys, e.g. DHS, LSMS, UNICEF multi-cluster survey, census data.
- Literature on children and poverty, e.g. PRSPs, World Bank, DFID, UNICEF, SCF reports, and reviews of childhood development.
- UN organisation reports, e.g. WHO reports on health, FAO reports on nutrition and food security.

Identifying outcomes of interest and developing flow charts

Drawing on the literature review, Young Lives identified six child welfare measures or outcomes of interest – physical health, nutrition, mental health, developmental stage for age, life skills (literacy and numeracy), and children’s perceptions of their well-being. The project prioritises breadth rather than depth and, in order to be as comprehensive as possible chose a mix of objective (e.g. nutrition) and subjective (e.g. children’s perceptions) outcomes. Although contexts vary, it is likely that these outcomes would be appropriate for another similar study.

Having identified the six outcomes, the project developed a flow chart for each one. The flow charts identify the causal pathways and explanatory variables or determinants for each outcome. These proved a very useful tool for brainstorming and identifying the determinants for each of the outcomes.

The flow charts made a clear distinction between ‘macro’ (policy) determinants and ‘micro’ (community and household) determinants: information on the former is gathered through policy tracking and information on the latter is collected through household and child questionnaires and the community survey. Examples of the Young Lives flow charts can be found in Document 9.

Practical points

- Decide what data it is feasible to collect. Young Lives decided it was not feasible to collect data at the macro level, and opted to measure indirectly how policy affects households and communities. The project is therefore collecting data at household and community level that are proxies for national level changes, and is monitoring changes in the policy context.
- Identify key outcome variables first. Then, work backwards to identify determinants and decide which of these are both a priority and can be measured with questionnaires. For example, Young Lives decided that sensitive issues, such as domestic violence, could not be properly addressed using questionnaires.

Identifying the ‘storylines’

Young Lives identified three ‘storylines’ (or key themes of analysis) – access to livelihoods, access to services, and access to social relations. When the flow charts were developed, these three themes were shown to be important for each of the six welfare measures. These particular themes were also selected

because they are issues of current interest in development and because there is limited information about how the three are interrelated. As a result, the project is focusing on key questions related to these three storylines:

- **Livelihoods** – How do differences and changes in livelihoods – and associated shocks and policy shifts – affect childhood poverty? Measuring assets, livelihoods, economic shocks and the influence of national policies, the longitudinal nature of the study will shed light on how changes are associated with child welfare over time.
- **Access to services** – How do differences or changes in services, especially health and education, affect childhood poverty? Tracking poor children’s experiences of health and education provision will contribute to the analysis of the impact of services on vulnerable populations.
- **Social relations** – What is the role of social relations in child welfare? Is social capital protective of well-being in the absence of other assets?

Practical points

- Select 'storylines' or themes that are relevant to current development debates and that will help you to engage with those working in different sectors.
- 'Storylines' can help to prioritise analysis of data when faced with many possible options.

Tools for measuring and monitoring the policy context

Defining the policy context and monitoring policy change is a key component of Young Lives.

Policy monitoring helps to identify those policy changes that are most likely to have an impact on communities, and in particular on poor households and children. These linkages will be both direct, (for example, a new child protection law), and indirect, (for example, trade policy that benefits some households and children and whilst adversely affecting others). It is also useful, when planning evidence-based advocacy, to identify areas of policy that need to be improved in order to tackle childhood poverty more effectively.

The type of information you might need to help understand the policy context for each of the Young Lives 'storylines' is summarised below.

STORYLINE	EXAMPLE INFORMATION FOR UNDERSTANDING THE POLICY CONTEXT
Livelihoods	Inflation, unemployment, government spending trends, major policy shifts in markets.
Services	Facility provision and use, expenditure trends, cost recovery measures, public versus private service provision, depth and breadth of targeted programmes.
Social capital	Ethnic and religious structure, discrimination, political system, nature of decentralisation, targeting of resources.

Understanding the policy context also helps to:

- Select sites for data collection – if study sites are purposively samples, it might be useful to select some sites that are targeted by a specific policy or programme.

- Interpret the findings – changes over time and variation from one place to another in child welfare and its determinants that correspond with changes or variation in the policy context.
- Identify topics for further investigation – more in-depth qualitative studies to explore specific issues relevant to policy.
- Plan future rounds of data collection – data collection tools such as questionnaires can be amended to capture the effects of policy changes.

Young Lives has developed guidelines and a matrix for policy tracking (See Document 2). The matrix provides an overview of key policy areas and highlights the linkages between them. Policy areas to be considered include:

- Long-term development frameworks e.g. 10 year plan, PRSP.
- Macro-economic policies, e.g. banking reform, fiscal reform, state-owned enterprise reform, private sector development, trade reform, institutional reform, export growth, debt burden, savings and investment.
- Sectoral policies, e.g. health, education, agriculture, poverty alleviation.
- General shocks, e.g. conflict, floods, drought, economic recession.

To track changes in policy you will need to look for information from a range of sources (see Box 2).

BOX 2: POSSIBLE SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR POLICY TRACKING

- Public Expenditure Tracking Studies, benefit-incidence studies.
- National economic surveys, economic studies, Economist Intelligence Unit country reports (www.eiu.com).
- Africa/Asia/Latin America Yearbook.
- World Bank country economic memoranda.
- IMF country reports, including statistical appendix.
- Budget, budget analysis and speeches.
- Government legislation.
- Sector policy documents.
- Qualitative analysis of service provision.
- Donor reports, e.g. DFID, Asian Development Bank.
- UNDP reports on monitoring of Millennium Development Goals, for sectoral indicators (e.g. numbers of teachers, numbers of health facilities).
- International and national media.
- NGO reports.
- Academic papers.

Practical points

- Although it is not feasible to collect data on some national policy issues, it should be possible to collect data that are proxies for, or local manifestations of, these issues.
- Make sure your policy matrix covers all major policy areas, including a section on policies relating to children. Start at the top with broad frameworks for policy, as this provides the context for more specific sectoral policies below.
- Use a spreadsheet for the matrix, as this makes it easier to update. Update the policy matrix at least every 6 months. Include a column for noting implications for the project.
- Avoid too much detail; you need a clear picture of the overall context. Rather than having a column for each year, which can result in too much detail, divide the matrix according to time periods. These should be linked to key periods such as changes in government or policy frameworks.
- In some countries, it will be necessary to include both national and state policy, where states or regions have their own comprehensive development frameworks.

Tools for data collection

The key data collection tools are:

- Household and child questionnaires.
- Community survey.

Household and child questionnaires

Young Lives developed three 'core' questionnaires, with inputs from the teams in all four countries (See Documents 3, 4 and 5):

- Household questionnaire for interviewing caregivers of 1-year-old 'index' children.
- Household questionnaire for interviewing caregivers of 8-year-old children.
- Child questionnaire for interviewing 8-year-old children directly.

The project opted to collect data from 8-year-old children and their households as a 'one-off' in the first round (unless additional funding is secured these children will not be followed up). This was done in order to provide comparative data, give the project some initial findings of interest at an early stage, and test techniques for collecting data from older children.

THE CORE QUESTIONNAIRES COVER THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:

TOPICS IN BOTH HOUSEHOLD QUESTIONNAIRES

- Child background** (name, caregiver, relationship)
- Household composition** (births, deaths, children)
- Caregiver background** (literacy, language, ethnicity, religion)
- Child health** (recent illness, illness or injuries in last 3 years, long term health problems, health care seeking behaviour)
- Livelihoods** (economic activities of all household members, other sources of money coming to household e.g. external organisations, government, relatives, support provided by household to others, debts, capacity to repay)
- Economic changes and events** (natural disaster, death of livestock, victim of crime, birth, death or illness)
- Socio-economic status** (land ownership, livestock, housing, fuel, toilet facilities, goods e.g. bicycle, radio, refrigerator, sewing machine)
- Social capital** (belonging to groups, sources of support, links with authorities, perceptions of wealth relative to others, feeling trust and a sense of belonging to the community, experience of crime)
- Tracking**
- Anthropometry**

TOPICS EXCLUSIVE TO 1-YEAR-OLD HOUSEHOLD QUESTIONNAIRE

- Pregnancy, delivery and breastfeeding**
- Child care** (sources of outside care, e.g. crèche, other carers outside household, care by younger children)
- Caregiver mental health**

TOPICS EXCLUSIVE TO 8-YEAR-OLD HOUSEHOLD QUESTIONNAIRE

- Child mental health**
- Child education** (type of school, attendance, length of time in school, reasons for not attending)
- Child daily activities** (work, play and leisure)

TOPICS EXCLUSIVE TO 8-YEAR-OLD CHILD QUESTIONNAIRE

- Perceptions of well-being** (things that make a child happy or unhappy, likes and dislikes about their immediate environment)
- Social capital** (time spent playing with friends, who they can go to with problems)
- School and work** (school attendance, likes and dislikes about school, work or other activities to get money)
- Health** (problems affecting daily living, school attendance, work)
- Literacy and numeracy** (reading sentence, writing three simple words, simple multiplication)
- Child development** (Raven's Colour Progressive Matrices (CPM) test using series of visual problems)

The international and national teams spent a considerable amount of time developing these questionnaires, and it should be feasible to use them in other settings with minimal adaptation. The practical points below highlight some of the lessons learned from this process.

Young Lives also developed detailed justification documents for the household questionnaires and the child questionnaire (see Documents 6 and 7), outlining why each topic is included, the rationale for information to be collected about each topic, and how this information will be used. These documents are based on a comprehensive review of the literature and of current ‘good practice’. They explain the choices made by the Young Lives project for inclusion or exclusion of specific topics and variables.

For example, the 8-year-old child questionnaire:

- Drew on recent literature about indicators that are important to children, to develop questions about children’s perceptions of well-being.
- Based questions on children’s work and schooling on an ILO standardised survey, and the UNICEF and World Bank study Voices of Poor Children.
- Adapted the literacy and numeracy tests used in the LSMS.
- Used the Raven’s coloured progressive matrices (CPM) to assess child development. The CPM test, which measures ability to evolve or develop new insights and information from that which is already perceived or known, has been accepted as reliable and valid across a range of different cultures.

BOX 3: COPYRIGHT

Young Lives incorporated some existing research tools in sections of the household and child questionnaires. Some of these tools are protected by copyright, and you will need to obtain permission to use them. The following summarises the copyright situation for these research tools used by Young Lives.

1-YEAR OLD QUESTIONNAIRE

- Self Reporting Questionnaire (SRQ-20)
Non-copyright tool developed by WHO to screen for psychiatric disturbance, especially in developing countries.

8-YEAR-OLD QUESTIONNAIRE

- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)
This is a strictly copyrighted instrument and if countries need to translate the measure into their own language they must do so with the full co-operation of Dr Robert Goodman at the Institute of Psychiatry, University of London. Copyright notice: The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires, whether in English or in translation, are copyrighted documents that may not be modified in any way. Paper versions may be downloaded and subsequently photocopied without charge for non-commercial purposes <http://www.sdqinfo.com/>
- Raven’s Coloured Progressive Matrices (CPM)
Copyright - JC Raven Ltd <http://www.jcravenltd.com/jcravenltd.html>
Young Lives bought manuals from Oxford Psychologists Press but countries may be able to source from organisations in country.

Practical points

- Developing the questionnaire was a lengthy process. This was partly due to the involvement of a multidisciplinary group of experts from sectors including health, education, child welfare, economics and other social sciences. However, involvement of different sectors is crucial to ensure a balanced range of questions.
- Much effort and time was spent refining long lists of questions to those that were considered essential. Make sure you have a clear framework before starting to identify

questions for inclusion in the questionnaires. As noted earlier, a key lesson learned is to start with outcome variables, then work back to determinants, to decide both on broad research questions and specific questions for inclusion in questionnaires.

- Be aware that it can be difficult to keep to a reasonable number of questions on each topic. Everyone thinks their questions are important and people from different sectors or disciplines have different views about which questions should be given priority. Reaching agreement on every question will involve compromise. Developing justification documents to accompany the questionnaires can help different partners and stakeholders to understand the arguments for including or not including questions.
- When deciding on key questions, think long term. This is one important way in which a longitudinal study is different from a cross-sectional study. You need to ensure that the right questions are included in the first round of data collection, because there is limited scope in a longitudinal study to change questions in subsequent rounds. Substantial changes will result in loss of comparability. However, for Young Lives some questions will be age-specific, and it is inevitable that such questions will be added or changed in each round. Remember also that some questions will have limited use in the first round but are important for subsequent rounds, for example, questions that provide information for tracking.

BOX 4 ISSUES TO CONSIDER WHEN DECIDING WHAT QUESTIONS TO INCLUDE

- Some variables are transitory in nature and thus only useful for analysis of that round, e.g. it is unlikely to be useful to link whether or not a child had diarrhoea in one round with an outcome indicator in a later round. It is also important to include variables that are likely to be usefully linked. For example, height for age at an early stage can be linked with developmental stage for age at later stage, because low height for age is a measure of chronic malnutrition, which can determine future development.
- Some variables are very culture specific, limiting cross-country analysis and sub-group analyses within countries.
- Some variables are proxies for other variables that are difficult to measure, e.g. antenatal care can represent foetal nutrition, child care practices, maternal knowledge, some or all of which may be associated with an outcome variable.

- Consider practical issues, including the length of time required to administer questionnaires and the burden on respondents. Other issues to consider include clarity and order of questions, and factors that might affect the quality of data produced, such as recall error. Avoid questions that are very sensitive or might cause difficulties for children or caregivers.
- Work with experienced fieldworkers designing the questionnaires. They will be able to advise on questions which will and will not work in practice. Pilot testing of questionnaires (see Section 4) is also a critical part of the design process.
- When designing a questionnaire it is important to consider how you will analyse data. For example, you could develop a crude tabulation plan to check that the questions will provide the data you are looking to collect.

Community surveys

Young Lives developed a community questionnaire (see Box 5 and document 8) to be completed in each site where data is collected along with guidelines for supervisors on how to conduct the interviews. Information was drawn from interviews with key informants, such as community leaders and health workers, and was complemented with information from other sources, such as government data and reports. Community surveys:

- Reduce the length of the household questionnaires, by providing information about community factors that affect all households.
- Provide information about the context of children's lives and the way in which policy changes can affect communities and households.

BOX 5: YOUNG LIVES COMMUNITY SURVEY

The community questionnaire covers:

- **Physical environment** – e.g. population size and change, natural and built features, housing characteristics, recent disasters, and pollution.
- **Social environment** – e.g. languages spoken, ethnic groups, religion, political representation, community leadership, social problems, crime and violence.
- **Infrastructure and amenities** – e.g. police station, post office, telephone, electricity, piped water, sanitation and garbage, access to markets and shopping habits, roads, public transport services, community groups and development programmes.
- **Economy** – e.g. economic activities, land ownership and rights, crops, use of fertiliser, commercial farming, industry, employment opportunities, sources of credit, and prices.
- **Health and education** – e.g. availability, types, access to facilities and personnel, schools, fees, adult literacy schemes.

Practical points

- The community questionnaire took time to develop. You may need to modify the community questionnaire further, to ensure that the questions are suitable for both urban and rural settings.
- Make sure that the community questionnaire provides the contextual information required to develop community profiles that can be used to inform analysis of the data. It is a good idea to develop clear guidelines for writing up community profiles.

Thematic studies

Young Lives initially plans to carry out a series of thematic studies to provide qualitative information in parallel with quantitative data collection. In the first phase, the project has completed secondary data analysis to support the quantitative findings (see Young Lives Working Papers 3,6 and 8), conducted short participatory studies with children in each of the four countries, and developed criteria for selection of topics for thematic studies (See document 10). In one country, the Young Lives team did a considerable amount of qualitative formative research as part of the process of developing the questionnaires. However, the project decided that it would be better to carry out more in-depth thematic studies when analysis of the first round data has been completed.

Practical points

- Be clear about what you want to study in more depth and why. Additional studies should add value or depth to data on a certain issue, and not be used to fill gaps that could be addressed in future data collection. They can be used as ‘scoping’ studies, to identify issues for inclusion in future rounds of data collection.
- Use qualitative studies to obtain information about issues that are sensitive or difficult to address adequately in a questionnaire.
- Consider using case studies and oral histories to provide more qualitative information about children’s perceptions of their lives.

3. Getting Organised

Important issues to consider are:

- Establishing effective management arrangements and partnerships.
- Developing a project plan and timeframe.
- Planning and organising budgets and funding.
- Establishing advisory panels.
- Obtaining permission to proceed with the project.
- Conducting a national literature review.

Establishing effective management arrangements and partnerships

In each country, Young Lives has a national coordinator and a principal investigator. The National Coordinator is based at Save the Children UK and is responsible for advocacy and policy monitoring work, while the principal investigator, is based in a research institution and is responsible for managing the research. Partnership between those involved in policy and advocacy work, and those involved in research is a critical aspect of the project.

Practical points

- Identify credible partners. Project experience indicates that the involvement of a credible, well-known national research institution can facilitate obtaining official approval to go ahead with the research from national committees and local political leaders. Make sure you spend enough time consulting with government departments, university departments and private research institutions to identify a suitable research partner.
- Emphasise the benefits of partnership. In some countries, NGO credibility with government can be improved through partnership with a national academic institution. In others, working with a high-profile, respected NGO can increase the likelihood that the researchers will see their results disseminated and used. The combination of a highly regarded research institution and a high profile NGO can be very effective.
- Building effective partnerships between NGOs and academic organisations requires time and patience. Emphasise that the role of each partner is equally important, and make sure that the respective roles and responsibilities of the partners are clearly understood. Young Lives found that shared understanding of these issues was critical to effective partnership between organisations with different experiences and perspectives. In one country this was especially important since it was the first time that government, academic and NGO partners had worked together: there was initial confusion about the different roles of the three partners and about how issues such as budgets would be organised and managed.
- Involve all partners in all aspects of the project from the beginning. This helps to promote broader ownership of the project, rather than individuals or groups focusing on specific components. For example, it can help the research team to have a better understanding of which data are likely to be relevant for policy and advocacy.

- Be aware that there may be tensions as people adapt to a different way of working. For example, researchers are used to doing research then presenting the results for someone else to use rather than considering policy and advocacy issues from the start of the research process. In one country there were initially conflicting views about what constitutes 'research'. However, in practice, differences of opinion are most likely to focus around details, such as specific questions in the questionnaires, rather than on more fundamental issues. Such differences can usually be resolved through discussion and negotiation.
- Promote ongoing communication and regular meetings between those doing research and those doing policy and advocacy work. This helps to maintain good working relations and to ensure that activities are conducted in parallel. Agree on feasible project plans and timeframes and review these at regular intervals.

Planning and organising budgets and funding

Obtaining funding for long-term research is challenging, and longitudinal studies rarely receive funding to cover the whole project period. The Young Lives project is divided into five phases of three years, with one round of data collection taking place in each phase. It is currently funded for the first three years. Further fundraising is required to support activities beyond this period, and the same is likely to apply to similar studies. The project has allocated separate budgets for research and for policy and advocacy work in each country to the partners responsible for these respective areas of activity.

Practical points

- Make sure you budget for the project properly and include line items for all activities (see Document 11 for an example of the Young Lives costing form). Budget limitations could result in short-cuts being taken in areas of activity that are seen as less of a priority, such as the literature review, back translation, training or piloting, even though these are essential to the quality of the data and the success of the project.
- Be clear about financial arrangements, and establish clear systems of reporting and accountability. It is also important to be transparent about the budgets allocated to each partner, as this helps to promote good relationships.
- Develop a fundraising plan early on in the project, and start fundraising as soon as possible rather than waiting until your initial funding is coming to an end. Effective dissemination and profile raising (see Section 5) are critical aspects of successful fundraising.
- Remember that fundraising for the first round is the most difficult. Once you have some findings to present, it is possible to provide evidence that this type of project is feasible and produces useful results. Then, it is easier to convince donors to fund subsequent phases.

Establishing advisory panels

The country teams established multidisciplinary advisory panels, bringing together key stakeholders with a range of expertise. In one country, there were two panels, one focusing on technical issues and one on policy and advocacy issues. The other three countries had one panel covering all of these issues. Members are from government departments, key NGOs, the media and academia. In the first phase,

the contribution of the advisory panels include providing legitimacy to the project, ensuring direct links to the policy making arena and to the media, giving inputs to adapting the core questionnaires, and supporting applications for approval to go ahead with fieldwork.

Practical points

- Think carefully about whom you invite to join the advisory panel or panels, and limit the membership to a manageable size. The country literature review and stakeholder analysis or mapping can help to identify who the key players are in relation to children and poverty.
 - Decide what role you want the advisory panel or panels to play. This will depend to some extent on the stage of the project. Young Lives found that the most valuable role of the panels in the early phase was in assisting with raising the profile of the project and in obtaining permission, rather than technical inputs.
 - Involve individuals who bring expertise from relevant disciplines and sectors (e.g. government, NGO, donor, media, corporate sector). The Young Lives project found that there is much value in using multidisciplinary panels: it can help to ensure that questionnaires include a balanced range of questions and to enable the project to engage with different audiences with different interests. The Young Lives international panel, for example, includes individuals with expertise in general research methods, longitudinal studies and qualitative and quantitative research, policy and poverty analysis, child development, data management, and statistics. Links with the media are invaluable for dissemination and one country panel includes a well-known current affairs radio presenter.
 - Involve important government stakeholders, to give legitimacy and facilitate official support and approval. The advisory panel in one country involved representatives from key government ministries, including the Ministry of Finance. It is crucial that government statisticians are supportive of the research to avoid the results being dismissed on the basis of poor design and methodology. High profile individuals can help with wider dissemination, as the media may take more interest because of their involvement. However, you need to balance profile and availability when deciding whom to invite to join. If a high-profile individual is too busy to attend meetings or events, it may be better to identify an alternative.
 - If possible, identify and invite individuals who are committed to the issues, rather than asking government departments or organisations to nominate a representative. Otherwise, there is a risk that a less influential person will be sent to meetings, and who is less able to help champion the project.
 - Develop clear terms of reference describing the roles and responsibilities of advisory panels (see Box 6). Consider inviting people to join for a limited period of time. Some individuals may not be willing to make a commitment for longer than 2-3 years, whilst others might move on during the timeframe of a longitudinal study. It is important to have the flexibility to replace individuals who can no longer make a useful contribution, as well as to continue to use those who remain influential or valuable.

BOX 6: KEY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ADVISORY PANEL MEMBERS

- Play a monitoring and approval role, with an annual report and plan being submitted for examination.
- Ensure that the project conducts high quality policy-relevant research.
- Promote project links with other related initiatives and appropriate stakeholders.
- Act as ambassadors for the project, enhancing dissemination of project findings and contributing to the promotion of the project as an example of an evidence-based approach to advocacy.
- Provide advice on specific issues related to the member's area of expertise (health, media, economic policy, statistics etc)
- Participate in discussions on key aspects of the project, e.g. the development of research tools, identification of thematic studies

- Acknowledge the contribution of advisory panel members to the project. Their contribution does not necessarily have to be recognised in monetary terms, although in one country panel members were paid for work that was particularly time-consuming, such as reviewing and commenting on the questionnaires. For some panel members, knowing they will have access to the data and the research results in the future is sufficient incentive. However, the experience of Young Lives has shown that it is important to be clear from the start who 'owns' the data and when and how the results will be made available to panel members, as well as more widely.

Obtaining government permission and ethical approval

It is essential to obtain official government permission and approval from the appropriate research or ethics committee, before going ahead with a project that involves research. In some Young Lives countries, ethical approval was sought from the national committee responsible for reviewing research proposals. However, in others there was no committee responsible for approving the ethics of social science research and alternative approaches, including going through other committees or, in one case, establishing a new committee, were used.

Practical points

- In some countries, obtaining official permission was made easier because a government department was involved in the study or representatives from government ministries were members of the advisory panel. Advisory panels, by increasing legitimacy, can play an important role in helping to obtain official permission.
- Establish links with government officials early on and make sure they understand the purpose of the project and the methods used. This helps to build national ownership of the process and, ultimately, of the results. This is especially true in countries where governments may be suspicious of independently commissioned research or NGOs. Young Lives benefited from profile building and awareness-raising because the idea of collecting data about child well-being, rather than just child health and nutrition outcome measures was relatively new in some countries, as was the idea of a project combining research,

policy and advocacy. Be prepared to negotiate and compromise, and to go to the highest level to obtain permission.

- Allow adequate time in the project timeframe for getting permission, as this can be a lengthy process. In one of the Young Lives countries, the process took almost 10 months. In another, additional time had to be allowed to meet with provincial partners, who all had different approval processes.
- For a longitudinal study of this nature, periodic review will be required. No ethics committee is likely to give approval for a 15-year research project, as details about subsequent phases will only become clearer later.

4. Data Collection

PREPARING FOR FIELDWORK

Issues to consider include:

- Selecting sites and sample size.
- Developing guidelines for research involving children.
- Adapting the core questionnaires.
- Piloting the questionnaires.
- Translation and back translation.
- Planning for tracking and follow up.
- Recruiting supervisors and fieldworkers.
- Training supervisors and fieldworkers.

Selecting sites and sample size

Young Lives opted for a relatively small sample size, enrolling a cohort of 2000 index children in each of the four countries, and including a sample of 1000 8-year-old children in each country in the first round of data collection.

In each country, 20 sites were selected, using a semi-purposive approach, which over-sampled the poor. Within sites, index children and their households were selected by a method equivalent to random sampling. It is important to develop a strong justification for your sample size and selection method, to avoid rejection of your findings based on criticisms of the methodology

For an explanation of the Young Lives sampling approach, see Document 12.

Developing guidelines for research involving children

Research with children requires a different approach to research with adults, especially with regard to ethical issues. The Young Lives project developed guidelines (see Document 13) for conducting research with children, which were developed from existing SC UK guidelines, and are based on the following principles:

- The best interests of the child must always be considered.
- The child has the right to be respected and to be protected from harm.

Some of these guidelines apply to all children, others only to older children. You can use these as a basis for your own guidelines, but may need to adapt them to your country context.

Practical points

- Researchers need to be aware that children are vulnerable and that power dynamics between the researcher and the child may make the child feel uneasy.

- Research that involves children requires a different approach with respect to issues of consent and confidentiality from research that only involves adults. When planning your research, develop clear guidelines on obtaining informed consent from adult and child participants. Caregivers need to be informed that research may involve collecting information directly from the child and that although this may be done in private it will only be with their and the child's consent. You also need to consider the possibility that children who are willing to participate at the age of 4 or 8 years, may decide at the age of 11 or 14 years that they no longer wish to take part.
- Researchers also need to be aware that children have different competencies and ways of seeing the world to adults. Interviews with children can take much longer than interviews with adults because of the time it takes to put children at ease. This needs to be taken into account when planning fieldwork logistics and timing.

Adapting the core questionnaires

The Young Lives 'core' questionnaires were designed so that they could be used in any setting, and therefore, allow international comparisons to be made.

However, the questionnaires are also intended to provide researchers with a flexible tool, and it is possible to change the sequencing of some sections, and to add sections or questions. Some national research teams, following discussions with advisory panels, adapted the questionnaires to their country context by adding sections or questions. One, for example, added a section with more details on migration and child labour, while another added questions to obtain more information about community health services and community support to households that have experienced shocks.

Practical points

- Make sure that the research team, advisory panel and experts have thoroughly read the core questionnaires and the justification documents before starting to discuss the addition of new sections or questions. This helps to develop understanding and explain why some topics and questions were omitted from the core questionnaires.
- The process of reviewing the core questionnaires and developing additional country-specific modules and questions can take a long time, but can help to promote discussion and raise awareness of issues, especially with advisory panels.
- Take account of cultural issues when adapting the questionnaires, for example, in some contexts care is needed when asking questions about debt or death.
- Adding sections and questions increases the time required to administer questionnaires. Pilot an adapted version to see how much extra time is required. Ideally, interviews should take no more than two hours.

Piloting the questionnaires

The core questionnaires were initially piloted in South Africa, in urban and rural settings to test the general approach. This included fieldworker training, logistics of site selection and follow-up procedures. The pilot study drew on the experience of the South African 'Birth-to-Twenty' project, a

study of child health and development that has been running for 12 years and has much in common with Young Lives. The South Africa pilot study report is available as Young Lives Working Paper 9.

The revised questionnaires were then piloted in the four Young Lives countries. Each country took a slightly different approach to piloting, depending on available time and resources. Ideally, the core questionnaires should be piloted in a range of different settings.

Practical points

- Piloting is essential to find out how long it takes to administer the core questionnaires, how much time might be available for additional country-specific sections and questions, and how long it takes to administer adapted versions. It also helps to determine the most appropriate sequencing of sections and questions.
- Piloting is important to identify whether the wording of questions is clear and understandable to those being interviewed. Piloting allows ambiguities to be identified and removed before the questionnaire is finalised.
- Giving fieldworkers the chance to practice during piloting can inform the subsequent training process, by identifying sections or questions that cause problems, ideas and issues that are not clear, and skills that need to be strengthened.
- Factors that have not been considered are often revealed during piloting. In India, for example, the recent decline in fertility had altered the demographic profile to such an extent that it was easier to find 8-year-old children than 1-year-old children.
- Piloting also helps you to plan fieldwork, by showing how well fieldworkers cope with conditions, identifying logistical constraints, and highlighting potential problems with recording or checking data.

Translation and back translation

If questionnaires are translated, back translation is essential. Evidence from the literature shows that the back translation of questionnaires results in better quality data. Back translation means that after the questionnaires have been translated into the language in which they will be administered, they are translated back into English by an independent translator.

Practical points

- Do not skip this step. Back translation is crucial to ensure that meanings have been translated as intended. There is always a risk that the meaning is subtly changed or lost in translation, particularly with questions about mental health. In some countries, it can be difficult to translate concepts related to certain feelings and perceptions. For example, in one Young Lives country, there was no obvious equivalent term for the concept of 'self worth'.
- Allow enough time for translation and back translation to be done properly, and make sure you include an adequate budget for this.

- Use well-qualified, experienced translators. Saving on the costs of translation is a false economy and impacts negatively on the quality of data collected.
- If you make revisions to copyrighted tools, you will need to get permission for using the translated version.
- Good translation does not guarantee that fieldworkers or respondents will necessarily interpret the questions in the manner intended. It is therefore essential that training of fieldworkers allows enough time for discussion and understanding of the meaning of the questions.

Planning for tracking and follow-up

Tracking means checking that index children are still there, but does not involve data collection. Since rigorous tracking is essential in longitudinal studies, to minimise attrition (or losses to follow-up), the Young Lives project paid particular attention to planning for tracking from the start, and the research teams used a range of approaches (see examples in Box 7).

'Follow-up' means subsequent survey rounds of data collection. Young Lives will follow up index children at 4, 8, 11 and 14 years of age. The project selected 3-4 year intervals, since longer intervals would miss important changes in children's lives and shorter intervals would not be feasible, either in terms of the logistics of data collection and analysis, or the availability of funding.

Working Paper 5 in the Young Lives working paper series discusses tracking and attrition in more depth.

Practical points

- Start planning how you will track the movement of index children at the beginning of the project. The tracking protocol should establish how much effort and time to spend on tracking children who have moved. Planning at the start also means that you can include tracking questions in the first round survey. For example, the Young Lives core questionnaires include questions about contact details of relatives.
- Obtain as detailed a list as possible of contacts outside the index household, for example, relatives, neighbours or friends, who might be able to tell you in future rounds where a family has moved to. An important element of informed consent is that participants agree and expect to be tracked, and understand that this is not just a one-off visit.
- Monitor the number of movements recorded in the first 6 months following data collection, and use this information to inform future tracking guidelines.
- Losses to follow-up tend to be highest in the first year or two of a child's life, so contact with respondents between main survey rounds is particularly important during this period. The experience of other studies also shows that the sooner you track, the easier it is to find people as they often move again quite soon.
- Tailor your plans according to what is necessary and feasible. Frequency and methods of tracking will depend, for example, on the size of the country, extent of social control, patterns of migration, differences between urban and rural settings, literacy levels, and

whether or not households have a specific address or access to a functioning postal or telephone system. In one Young Lives country, there is considerable rural to urban migration so rigorous tracking is required for rural sites. In contrast, in another, there is limited movement in rural areas but people move more frequently in urban areas, so the tracking plan involves annual visits to rural sites and 6-monthly visits to urban sites. Forms for notifying a change of address have been used successfully in one country, but may be less appropriate in settings where people have limited literacy.

- Decide who to track and the geographical scope of tracking. In one of the Young Lives countries, where people can potentially move long distances, the national team decided only to track children who had moved but were still living within the same district or city. Consider whether or not it is worthwhile tracking individual children who have moved far away. You will not have information about the community context in a new setting and it is not cost-effective to conduct a community survey, unless many children move to the same area. However, it is important to keep records of who has moved and, if possible, the reasons for migration in order to control for bias. For example, it may be the better off or most educated households that move or, conversely, the poorest.
- Decide what you will do during tracking visits. It is useful to find out, for example, why families have moved, to help monitor movement in and out of poverty.
- Maintain tracking systems even if you think a child has moved away, because children or households who move away often return. For example, children may move away temporarily for schooling or to live with grandparents or other relatives.

BOX 7: TRACKING METHODS

In the Young Lives study, approaches used to ensure effective tracking include:

- **Records of household location** – e.g. recording household postal and physical address; if there is no address, making sketch maps, using GPS to identify coordinates of houses, recording detailed directions to the house and information about distance and location relative to local landmarks such as the mosque or church, to assist location of the household in subsequent rounds.
- **Records of key contacts** – e.g. recording detailed information in the core questionnaires about the index household's family, such as the mother's three closest relatives, friends and neighbours; recording a detailed family tree, including relatives who are further away as well as local.
- **Administrative and political structures** – e.g. asking village leaders, teachers and health workers; using political committees; using ID card systems or electoral lists which maintain records of where people are located, if these are regularly updated, to track a child's parents; using census data (if ethical approval can be obtained); enlisting organisations that keep comprehensive community records, such as women's groups, funeral associations and credit organisations in rural areas or neighbourhood committees in urban areas; holding an annual meeting of key informants to review index child movements and update community information.
- **Community informants and village workers** – e.g. paying a small fee to community informants, such as the chair of the farmers' association or schoolteacher or to community workers, such as village health workers, to keep track of children and send regular reports on movement of index households, with the new address and reasons for moving.
- **Maintaining contact with the household** – e.g. making 6, 12 or 18 month tracking visits; sending pre-paid reply cards to households (if there is a well functioning postal system); keeping in touch by mailing an annual project newsletter or calendar or birthday card to the index child; giving each participating household a card with a photograph of the index child and the house and project contact details so the household can notify the team if they move.
- **Forms** – e.g. including a change of address notification form with the consent form; using forms asking if the family intends to move in the near future and their likely destination.

- Build in adequate time and resources for training a new cadre of interviewers and supervisors for future rounds of data collection. The fieldworkers employed for the first round will not necessarily be available in several years' time. There may also be staff turnover in your research or NGO teams, so allow time and resources for new personnel to develop an understanding of the project.
- Try as far as possible to collect data at the same time of year. This will help to avoid bias due to issues such as seasonal variations in the availability of cash or food, and will ensure as far as possible that household and key informant interviewees will be available. This is particularly important in settings where there is seasonal labour migration.

Recruiting supervisors and fieldworkers

Selection of fieldworkers is crucial to the success of data collection. Equally, if not more, important, given their responsibilities (see Box 8), is the selection of suitable supervisors.

BOX 8: RESPONSIBILITIES OF SUPERVISORS

- Organising logistics, travel, accommodation, and remuneration of fieldworkers.
- Negotiating with and accessing communities.
- Managing fieldwork and fieldwork teams.
- Supervising and supporting fieldworkers.
- Checking questionnaires and ensuring quality control.
- Ensuring child protection and ethical guidelines are followed.
- Dealing with problems, difficult cases, and referrals.

Young Lives research teams in each country selected experienced fieldworkers and supervisors, either using those they had employed for previous research or using links with academic institutions to identify suitable interviewers. Examples of criteria used to select fieldworkers are included in Box 9.

BOX 9: CRITERIA FOR SELECTING FIELDWORKERS

- Minimum high school education.
- Ability to speak local language.
- Previous experience in community survey work.
- Ability to understand the purpose of the project and the underlying concepts and ideas.
- Appreciation of the value of questionnaires and of good quality, accurate data.
- Good interpersonal and communication skills.
- Aptitude and suitable personal qualities for working with children.
- Motivation and initiative.

Practical points

- Fieldworkers do not need to have a college education, although graduates were used in two of the Young Lives countries. Personal qualities are more important than formal qualifications, and the experience of other Young Lives countries showed that individuals with high school education are as capable of conducting fieldwork as those with a university qualification.
- Fieldworkers recruited from the community can be very useful. If you recruit fieldworkers in the area where the research will be conducted, make sure that they do not know the index households personally and be aware of potential difficulties if supervisors are not recruited from the same area. In one country, fieldworkers were selected from the community and supervisors from the capital and problems arose because some supervisors were unable to communicate effectively in local languages.
- Fieldworkers should not have other responsibilities, so they can give their full attention and commitment to the work.
- Female fieldworkers are often more able to deal with sensitive questions during interviews and have a better rapport with children. However, in two of the Young Lives countries it was not practical or feasible to recruit female interviewers, because of the locations of the fieldwork sites and the time away from home required.
- If possible, assess the practical and interpersonal skills of fieldworkers before you recruit them. In one country, the research team tested potential fieldworkers to see how they interacted with children, before formally recruiting them. In another country, where this was not feasible, some fieldworkers showed little aptitude for working with children and this caused problems during data collection, with some children becoming upset during interviews.
- In a few cases, fieldworkers and supervisors who did not reach the required standard were dismissed. Make sure you have mechanisms for identifying poor quality work and for dismissing poor workers sooner rather than later, to avoid compromising data quality.

Training supervisors and fieldworkers

Supervisors and fieldworkers need good quality training to ensure that they understand what the project is about and that they have the necessary practical skills. In some Young Lives countries, the international and national research teams trained supervisors and trainers, who in turn trained the fieldworkers.

Trainers used the comprehensive training manual developed by the project (see Documents 14 and 15), which could be used in other settings with little or no adaptation. These manuals cover a wide range of issues including the purpose of the project, introduction to longitudinal studies, interviewing techniques and use of anthropometric tools, content of questionnaires, working with communities, developing rapport with households, specific considerations for interviewing children, and ethical issues such as child protection, informed consent and confidentiality. The core training manuals were adapted to the needs of each country.

Fieldworkers were trained to use the core questionnaires section by section. Training emphasised the development of practical skills, and fieldworkers practised conducting interviews through role-play, practice with each other, neighbours and friends, and practice in the wider community.

Practical points

- Allow adequate time for training. Ideally you need to allow at least 7-10 days for training supervisors and 7-10 days for training fieldworkers, to ensure they understand concepts, practice the questionnaires, and can perform anthropometry.
- Use experienced trainers, facilitators and resource people to conduct training. They should have a good understanding of research and practical field experience. Bring in outside expertise if you need inputs on specific issues (see Box 10).

BOX 10: USING OUTSIDE EXPERTISE

Expertise found useful in training fieldworkers for the Young Lives project included:

- **Using structured questionnaires and managing large field projects** – trainers with extensive experience of the logistics of fieldwork, the situations interviewers may encounter in the field, interview strategies and good practice.
- **Child psychology and development** – trainers with experience of working with children and understanding of the challenges and skills required to interview young children effectively. A trainer with experience of using the developmental assessment tool (Raven's CPM) in a clinical or research setting, and an appreciation of psychometric tools is also valuable in training fieldworkers in the use of the mental health measures - SRQ-20 and SDQ.
- **Child rights and child protection** – trainers with knowledge of child protection issues. The Young Lives used expertise from SC UK.
- **Child nutrition and anthropometry** – trainers with experience of training fieldworkers in the use of anthropometric tools in large field projects.
- **Anthropology** – trainers with knowledge of the culture and beliefs of ethnic minorities.

- Involve the research team in fieldworker training, as this helps researchers to be aware of practical issues and helps fieldworkers to develop a better understanding of the purpose of the research and the importance of collecting good quality data.
- Team building is a key element of training. Fieldworkers will be spending a lot of time travelling and living together while they are collecting data.
- Effective training is participatory and practical. Using participatory methods enables fieldworkers to draw on their experience when they discuss and practise using the research tools. Allow fieldworkers enough time to develop and practice their skills. In some countries, a lot of time was required to practice using anthropometry tools and administering specific sections of the questionnaires such as the Ravens test. Be aware that fieldworkers may need to practice some sections more than others.
- Go through sections and questions systematically to ensure that fieldworkers understand the intended meaning of all the questions, and allow enough time for discussion of more complex questions. This is particularly important when the questions will be administered in other languages. Translating certain concepts into local languages, especially concepts

related to child psychosocial issues, was one of the most challenging aspects of Young Lives. Discussing and agreeing appropriate translations for these concepts and for technical terms can take considerable time.

- Pay particular attention to developing fieldworker skills for working with children. In the Young Lives countries, this was the most important aspect of training, as even experienced fieldworkers had limited experience of working with children and little understanding of child psychology and development. The project found it helpful to use outside experts to provide training on psychosocial aspects of childhood and practical aspects of child-sensitive research, and also the training manuals included a specific section on working with children.
- Child protection is an important aspect of training. Supervisors were specially trained to ensure the safety of children being interviewed and that guidelines on protecting children were put into practice. Also, training should provide clear guidance about referral, depending on the local context and services available, so that fieldworkers know what to do when they encounter children with serious problems such as sexual or physical abuse, exposure to violence, behavioural problems, physical illness or mental health problems. (See Box 11)

BOX 11: PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH INFORMATION ABOUT SEXUAL OR OTHER ABUSE

- If a child begins to tell you about sexual or other abuse, end the interview as soon as possible. (If a child discloses details of abuse, you may be legally obliged to pass on the information to the authorities and also to testify in court.)
- Do this in a calm, caring and supportive way, which does not alarm or upset the child.
- Reassure the child that you believe them, that they have done nothing wrong and that it was right to talk about it.
- Explain that you are not the right person to talk to and that you will make sure that an adult who can help them will come to listen to them soon.
- Sometimes passing on information is against the child's wish, so you must make it clear that you may not be able to keep such information totally confidential.
- Report the child's name, details and the fact that abuse is suspected to a local welfare organisation equipped to follow up and take action on such abuse, but give the information only to those who need it.

CARRYING OUT THE FIELDWORK

Issues to consider include:

- Organising the fieldwork.
- Accessing communities.
- Obtaining informed consent.
- Providing incentives.
- Conducting interviews and recording responses.
- Supervising fieldworkers.
- Quality control.
- Referring cases.
- Conducting community surveys.

Organising fieldwork

The country partners took different approaches to conducting the fieldwork. In some, the same team of fieldworkers went to all sites in sequence while, in others, different teams conducted surveys in different sites simultaneously.

Practical points

- Conducting fieldwork in sequence, using the same team in every site, enables fieldworkers to improve their skills and promotes a consistent approach. However, the process of data collection takes longer and this approach may not be possible if different languages are spoken in different areas. Using different teams in different sites simultaneously reduces the length of time required for data collection, but the approach may be less consistent.
- Consider carefully the timing of fieldwork, so that it does not coincide with, for example, planting or harvesting, seasonal migration for work, or the rainy season when travel is more difficult. Remember that, ideally, you will need to conduct repeat rounds at the same time of year to ensure that the same respondents are available.
- The approach to carrying out the fieldwork will be determined to some extent by the local context. Selecting households in a crowded city will be very different from selecting households in a remote area with scattered hamlets. In one Young Lives country, fieldworkers did anthropometry in the home, because households were widely dispersed, while in another, this was done at a central point, because households were located close together.
- Identifying children of the appropriate age can be problematic. In many countries, there is no birth registration system, and people do not know exactly how old a child is. For example, in one country it was easy to identify 1-year-old children, because all children of this age have an immunisation card, but it was not so easy to identify 8-year-old children. In the cases of unknown age, fieldworkers used a calendar of significant events to try and establish children's ages.

Accessing communities

The national teams used a range of entry points – local organisations, administration structures, and leaders – to obtain access to communities. The involvement of an international organisation, such as SC UK, and of a credible national academic institution helped considerably.

Practical points

- Ease of access to community depends on the local context. In many communities, it is necessary to obtain the support of local political, traditional or religious leaders before you can conduct fieldwork. Identify and approach local people with influence. In one country, access in rural areas was negotiated with traditional leaders while, in urban areas, access was obtained through formal political structures.
- Explain clearly the purpose of the research and address any community concerns. In one country, for example, some parents were worried that their children might be taken away if they were found to be poor. In another example, some parents were concerned that fieldworkers were trying to convert them to another religion.

Obtaining informed consent

The research teams provided fieldworkers with practical guidelines about informed consent (see Box 12). This was important because even experienced fieldworkers were not aware of all aspects of informed consent, especially in research involving children. Obtaining informed consent was easier in some settings than in others, and generally people were willing to participate in the research.

Practical points

- Support from local leadership is essential but can sometimes result in the community being coerced into participating in the research. Young Lives found that, in practice, few households refused to participate. However, in some cases this may have been because of pressure from community leaders or government officials.
- Be aware that people may not directly refuse to participate. For example, in one country, people would not directly refuse to participate but made excuses about not having time.
- Record information about refusal rates and reasons for refusing to participate.
- Be flexible about the time given to make the decision about whether or not to participate. Young Lives recommended that people be given 24 hours to decide whether or no they wanted to participate. However, in practice, this was not always feasible, because time was limited or because communities were very remote or scattered and it was not possible to come back the next day. In one country, fieldworkers got round this problem by asking people in the morning and going back later the same day.
- You may need to talk to other members of the household as well as the caregiver, in order to obtain consent. Young Lives found that, in some instances, the caregiver, usually the mother, would agree in principle, but having spoken to her husband or mother-in-law would change her mind after 24 hours.

- Obtaining signed consent is difficult in communities with low literacy. In one country, fieldworkers read the forms and signed on behalf of the participants in some cases.

BOX 12 PRACTICAL GUIDELINES ON INFORMED CONSENT

- Obtain informed consent in all cases from: the child's parent or caregiver; 'gatekeepers' (people who can prevent you obtaining access to the child or who can give you access to the child) such as teachers or respected leaders in the community; and most importantly, the child, if he or she is old enough.
- Informed consent means that you tell the person enough about the nature and extent of the research so that they can make a proper and informed decision about whether or not to take part.
- Allow the person giving informed consent, whether an adult or a child, 24 hours to decide whether or not they wish to take part.
- Obtain consent in writing and ensure it is witnessed by another adult.

Providing incentives

The research teams in all four Young Lives countries considered the issue of providing incentives for participating in the research. Some teams opted not to provide any incentives. For example, the team in one country decided not to give anything, because of concerns that others in the community would demand to be included in the sample. Others opted to provide a reward for participation, such as items of food, but only at the end of the interview and the anthropometry.

Ideally, it is better not to provide incentives or rewards for participation, as this can change the nature of consent and bias the research, and can create expectations during follow-up rounds and problems with other households in the community that are not selected to take part

Practical points

- Being clear about incentives is particularly important in longitudinal studies where fieldworkers will be returning several times to conduct follow-up rounds. If you decide not to provide an incentive, be honest about this from the start. Make sure fieldworkers explain clearly to respondents that they will not receive any direct benefits from participating in the research, and that fieldworkers know how to handle community requests for rewards for participation. Allowing adequate time to establish good relationships with households and the wider community is most important
- Providing incentives has resource implications, which may be important if the research budget is limited
- If one study offers incentives, this can have an adverse effect on other studies, which do not offer incentives.
- Consider alternatives to material incentives to keep participants interested. In one country, fieldworkers took a photograph of the mother and the child and sent this to the household with a card welcoming them to the 'Young Lives Club'. This card was also designed as a tracking tool, with a request to let the project know if the family moved.

- If you decide it is necessary to provide an incentive, keep it small and do not give it until the data collection is complete. In one country, the team decided that they should give a gift of coffee, because households traditionally offer guests coffee, even though many can ill afford it.

Conducting interviews

All interviews were conducted at or near the home of the respondent.

Practical points

- Conduct interviews in a way that respects local customs and values. For example, it may be considered inappropriate for a male fieldworker to be alone with a female child when conducting an interview.
- Fieldworkers can only do a certain number of interviews a day when an interview takes up to two hours. Make sure that fieldworkers record the timing of each interview so that supervisors can monitor progress.
- Develop strategies to help fieldworkers who experience difficulties asking certain types of questions. Even after training, some fieldworkers were afraid of asking sensitive questions or were concerned about the reliability of the answers to these questions. Interviewers were encouraged to write notes, and space was provided in the questionnaires to allow them to do this.
- Be aware that where the spelling of names in English varies, difficulties can occur in data entry and analysis. In some cases it may be better to record names in the original language to avoid problems later.
- Make sure that fieldworkers appreciate the importance of accurate recording of responses. Young Lives found that in some cases, interviewers were paraphrasing participants' responses to open questions instead of writing them in full. Ideally, fieldworkers should record complete answers word for word. Questionnaire design and layout needs to allow enough space for recording responses in full. Emphasise the importance of writing down children's responses accurately. Where appropriate, this should be in the local language, and should retain any culturally-specific idioms or grammatical errors. It is important to record as much information as possible, as some detail may be lost when answers are translated.
- It is better for fieldworkers to record responses in pen than in pencil. There is potential for supervisors or others to change questionnaires afterwards if answers are written in pencil. Tell fieldworkers that it is acceptable to cross out mistakes and to rewrite the answer.

Supervising fieldworkers

Supervisors were responsible for supervising and supporting fieldworkers. To help them, the Young Lives team in each country developed a series of guidelines to help them.

Practical points

- Take steps to ensure the well-being of fieldworkers. Supervisors in Young Lives countries made sure, for example, that fieldworkers were protected against malaria and were provided with potable water and adequate food and accommodation. Where there are concerns about personal security, fieldworkers should work in pairs or avoid working in after dark.
- Set payments and incentives for fieldworkers and supervisors carefully. Assess payments made for similar work by other organisations. In one country, supervisors were unhappy with their payment rates as other organisations were paying more.
- Supervisors need to continue team-building activities during the fieldwork, to maintain a good team spirit. Living and eating together is an important aspect of team building.
- Allow adequate time for fieldworkers to rest and to debrief. You may need to provide counselling or other emotional support for fieldworkers, as interviewing very poor families and children can be stressful and upsetting.

Supervisors also need to be available to provide support to fieldworkers who are unsure about how to deal with difficulties, for example, families with serious problems.

- Supervisors must be prepared to be part of the fieldwork team and to stay with the team throughout the process. In one country, one of the supervisors did not want to stay in the same place as the fieldworkers and this created tension.
- Be prepared to change or to switch supervisors, if they are not working well with their fieldwork team.

Quality control

Supervisors were also responsible for checking completed questionnaires. In all the Young Lives countries, completed questionnaires were checked on site and errors were corrected by repeat visits to the household.

Practical points

- Supervisors should check completed questionnaires on the same day as the interview, so that they can go back to the household and check if they have any queries or if there is missing information.
- Supervisors should observe a proportion of interviews to check the approach used by fieldworkers. Another way of checking the way that interviews are conducted, is for supervisors themselves to redo a section of the questionnaire in a sample of households, for example, one per interviewer in each site.
- Supervisors can be moved between fieldwork teams to ensure effective quality control.

Referring cases

Young Lives is not an intervention study and therefore does not provide treatment or care for those participating in the research. However, providing some type of help may be of particular importance in

longitudinal studies, as you are trying to establish a relationship with the household and fieldworkers will be returning in the future.

In all four countries, training and fieldwork guidelines covered what to do if a fieldworker discovers a child or an adult caregiver with a serious physical or mental health problem or a child they considered to be at risk.

Practical points

- Establish clear guidelines for referral. In the Young Lives project, each research team developed guidelines for referral, according to the local context and the availability of services. In one country, the project had to agree to refer cases in order to obtain ethical approval for the research. As a result, the local team had to obtain additional funding to pay for transport of cases to the nearest relevant health services and for initial treatment. In cases of serious mental illness, arrangements were made to see a psychologist. In other countries, fieldworkers were trained to refer cases to the nearest clinic or to local NGOs, and were provided with a list of organisations in the area.
- Be clear about the limits of how much you can do and who can be helped. For example, it may be feasible to refer index children and their caregivers, or even other members of the household, but not to address the needs of other households in the community.

Conducting the community surveys

The community surveys, which are intended to provide information about the context of children's lives, are an important component of the fieldwork in the Young Lives project. Supervisors were responsible for conducting these surveys while they were in the field. In practice, fieldwork in the first phase tended to concentrate more on administering the household and child questionnaires, and insufficient attention was given to the community surveys. In some of the Young Lives countries, supervisors only conducted one community questionnaire in each sentinel site, and this was not adequate where sites covered a large and diverse area.

Practical points

- Community profiles provide important contextual information for the data collected through the household and child questionnaires, and can also help to determine priority issues for data analysis.
- Make sure that the training of supervisors gives sufficient emphasis to the importance of the community surveys, and to developing the skills required to conduct these surveys.
- Work with supervisors to develop strategies for approaching community leaders to obtain permission to conduct the community survey and to seek their help in identifying key informants.
- Decide whether or not to repeat community surveys during subsequent rounds of data collection. Repeat surveys can identify changes in the local environment that may affect children's lives.

5. Managing and Analysing Data

At the start of the project, it is very important to decide who ‘owns’ the data, both raw and analysed, and when and to whom the data will be released. Data management covers all aspects of data handling, from data collection through data entry and checking, to archiving. It continues throughout the life of the project and beyond.

Issues to consider include:

- Data management.
- Data entry.
- Data checking and cleaning.
- Data analysis.

Data management

Collecting data is expensive, so efficient and effective data management is critical. Problems with data entry, cleaning, checking, merging, storage, analysis or interpretation cost time and money, and can adversely affect the quality and usefulness of the results. Young Lives utilised an experienced data manager, to ensure that the whole process of data entry and analysis ran smoothly, and developed a detailed data analysis pack that includes documents such as data checking guidelines, tabulation plans and syntax files (See Document 16).

Practical points

- Employ a data manager with the experience and skills required to manage very large and complex datasets (see Box 13), to take full-time responsibility for the data. This individual needs to be familiar with the data, and to be well organised, methodical and committed. It is better for one person to have overall responsibility than to share responsibility for data management between different staff. It is also a good idea for the manager to have a deputy, as well as for procedures to be documented, to avoid problems if the data manager leaves. Remember, a data manager is not the same as a statistician.

BOX 13 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DATA MANAGER

- Review questionnaire design.
- Assess computer capacity requirements.
- Set up database and coding.
- Set up systems for back up, archiving and storage.
- Set up data entry forms.
- Manage data entry process and quality control systems.
- Manage data cleaning, checks and consistency, as data is entered and afterwards.
- Set up a secure system for storing paper copies of questionnaires.
- Establish systems to protect confidentiality, for example, scope to remove names and other identifying information if the database is to be made publicly available.

- Establish simple guidelines for data management, covering issues including coding sites, households and children, storing questionnaires, data entry, and database management. Follow these guidelines from the start and document any deviations.
- Your data management system should document data effectively, allow you to find the data you need quickly, and keep data archives and back-ups safe, up-to-date and usable.
- Involve the data manager at the questionnaire design stage, not to review the questions but to review the way in which the questionnaire is organised. You also need to make sure that data management is included on the agenda of project meetings, so that it is considered by the whole project team.

A summary of some key data management issues to be considered can be found in Document 17.

Data entry

Young Lives created a standard database, which was adapted for each country, with separate tables for each section of the questionnaire. The project used Microsoft Access for data entry. Data entry forms were prepared by the Statistical Services Centre at Reading University.

Practical points

- Set up data entry forms. Data entry forms can be made to resemble the questionnaires, which helps to ensure consistency of datasets and can prevent problems caused by slight variations in format or data entry techniques. Be aware that data entry using forms is slower than most data entry clerks are used to, because of the program that is running behind the forms. However, slower but more controlled data entry is likely to produce better data quality.
- Make sure that data entry clerks receive adequate training, to minimise errors. It is also important to monitor their work carefully.
- Pay particular attention to dates and names. Young Lives experienced problems when, for example, dates were entered as both dd/mm/yy and mm/dd/yy and, when the same names were spelled in different ways. The latter was overcome through the use of a unique identifier for each child.
- Double data entry is a good method of data checking. Unfortunately Access does not have a built in facility for this.
- Effective quality control, especially data checking routines, can minimise data entry errors. In the Young Lives project, supervisors checked questionnaires to make sure they were complete and correct before signing off and passing the questionnaires to the data manager, and routines to catch errors were introduced at data entry.
- Rather than trying to convert qualitative information into quantitative form, it may be better to select key themes. Where questionnaires have been administered in local languages, the answers need to be translated back to English. The experience of Young Lives suggests that it may be more valuable to enter responses to open ended questions, for example, about children's perceptions, in the original language, to avoid losing meaning

and ensure that the richness of the data is captured. In one country, the database and data entry forms were translated to allow more qualitative information to be entered in the local language.

Data checking and cleaning

In Young Lives there were several phases of data checking:

- The first took the form of consistency checks by supervisors after data collection.
- The second was during data entry. The forms were programmed so that they would give warnings for some of the obvious inconsistencies, such as the number of children alive being more than the number of children born to a particular mother.
- The third was carried out in SPSS after the data had been transferred. An SPSS program was developed to check for inconsistencies in the data and errors found were checked back to the questionnaires and, if necessary, the fieldworkers. If inconsistencies still remained, a decision had to be made about whether or not to include these particular items in the analysis or whether to see them as missing values.

Practical points

- There was some debate about whether inconsistencies picked up during data entry should have prevented data entry continuing for that particular questionnaire until the inconsistency was resolved. However, it was decided that it would delay the data entry process if continual stops were made. Instead when warnings were given, data entry clerks made a note to check these records afterwards. In hindsight, further checks could have been made at the data entry stage, and these ideas will be incorporated into the next phase of the project.
- It is worth remembering that data errors can be introduced at any stage of the process. It is therefore important to be vigilant throughout. Any errors that are found later in the process must be corrected in the database. Datasets of this size are never totally clean.

Data analysis

Data was exported from Access databases for analysis using SPSS version 11. Young Lives is grateful to SPSS for allowing the project to use their software free of charge. The project developed guidelines (see documents 16 and 17), which cover all aspects of data analysis. This document does not discuss data analysis in detail, since Young Lives is currently carrying out preliminary analysis of the first round of data collected, and lessons emerging from this will be described in a future publication. However, experience to date has highlighted some important points to consider.

Practical points

- Allow enough time for preparation for data analysis. Cross-checking, recoding or the creation of composite indices, to get the data to the right stage, is what takes time rather than doing the actual analysis.

- Choose a statistical package that can handle the data analysis required. Young Lives opted to use SPSS, because other packages, such as Epi-Info, cannot handle more complex survey data analysis.
- Involve all the relevant partners in the process of data analysis. Make sure you involve statisticians at the start. If they understand the purpose of the research and are familiar with the questionnaires they will provide more useful inputs than if they are just brought in at the end to do multivariate analysis. Bringing in statisticians, as well as the data manager, at the start also helps to ensure that the design of the questionnaires will lead to the results you need.
- For a large, complex analysis done over a long period by several people, it is not enough to use Windows menus and mouse clicks to generate analyses. It is essential to have well-documented and properly-maintained records, based on syntax files in the case of SPSS, showing exactly what was done and exactly which dataset was involved.
- As a first step in analysis, it is helpful to develop a tabulation plan, choosing various key outcome and explanatory variables and looking at them in a consistent way. The Young Lives project developed a tabulation plan (See Document 16) early on using SPSS syntax files and conducted dummy runs using 'fake' data to test it out. This plan underpins the Preliminary Country reports where standard tabulations can be seen. (The Preliminary Country Reports are available on the Young Lives website (www.younglives.org.uk))
- At a later stage Young Lives will need to consider longitudinal data analysis, but after each round of data collection it will continue to be important also to analyse some of the data on a cross-sectional basis, for example, to provide descriptive information on the whole sample (e.g. percentage of index children malnourished) or selected subsets e.g. descriptive summaries restricted to a group such as scheduled caste children in Andhra Pradesh, or to compare sub-groups at particular points in time (e.g. boys and girls, or groups in different sites).

Analysing data on child outcomes

Young Lives anticipates that there will be external demands for specific results based on its data, from legitimate interests including national governments. The project has also planned researcher-driven data analysis including investigating the 'storylines' referred to above.

Practical points

- Consider how you will analyse the data collected about child outcomes as early as possible (see practical guidelines in Box 14 below). Many outcomes and groups of explanatory variables are possible. Choices about what to analyse should have a clear rationale that can be clearly linked to the conceptual framework and 'storylines'. Draft an analysis plan, with the outcomes and groups of variables that could be analysed, and then select the most promising for further investigation including modelling.
- Limit the number of relationships you choose; it is not possible to analyse everything. The focus of analysis should be determined by the key research questions and key policy

developments related to all three storylines. This is illustrated in the thematic presentations by country teams at the Young Lives Conference of September 2003 (Summaries of these presentations are available on the Young Lives website).

Analysing data from community surveys

In the Young Lives project, the tabulations produced from the community data are used to describe the basic characteristics of the community – *basic provisions, transport routes, health facilities, and educational facilities* – (These community characteristics and descriptions were not included in the preliminary reports) and are included in the preliminary report of the findings from the first round of data collection along with the descriptions of the community sites. As noted above, in the first routine analyses, the communities will be divided into poor and non-poor and rural and urban, as determined by the sampling strategy. Examples of tables from the Young Lives tabulation plan for community data are included in the Preliminary National Reports. For the preliminary report, households were divided according to urban/rural and wealth status.

The community data are also combined with individual-level data for some analysis. A community characteristic may be repeated in the individual-level data file for every member of the community. Individual-level results can be totalled or averaged to give a community-level score in that dataset, or subsets of the data may be selected on the basis of community features e.g. lack of primary health care access.

Analysing the relationship between child outcomes and policy change

Practical points

- Consider how you will analyse the relationship between child outcomes (findings from data collection) and findings from policy tracking, in other words, the impact of policy on communities, households and children. To do this you will need to identify which community and household variables are manifestations of, the national policy environment, or its meso-level implementation.
- It will only be possible to assess the relationship between policy change and child welfare outcomes on a longitudinal basis. After more than one round of data collection it should be feasible to link measurements at an earlier round with outcomes at the current round. Statistical analysis on its own is not likely to produce definitive results, but may be augmented by conducting thematic studies.
- It is important that both the research and the policy and advocacy teams review the preliminary findings and identify issues for more in-depth investigation in thematic studies. This ensures that issues of interest to policy makers receive attention.
- Consider carefully how you propose to involve households in more in-depth investigation, as ‘over-investigation’ may affect their willingness to participate in future rounds of data collection. You also need to consider carefully the issues you identify for thematic studies. Some households may not be willing to answer questions on more sensitive topics, when they believe they have consented to participate in more straightforward research on childhood poverty.

BOX 14 PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR ANALYSIS

PRE-ANALYSIS STEPS

- Develop a focused research question around one of the storylines, e.g. using the livelihoods storyline, Do some groups experience more shocks?
- Identify key outcome variables that are relevant to the research question.
- Justify the reason for the proposed choice, considering why this affects the outcome of interest and the likely direction of the association.
- Develop derived variables and record how these are calculated.
- Consider possible interactions and identify the most important ones, e.g. maternal education may influence child literacy.
- Consider confounders and adjust for these if necessary.
- List all the variables and draw a diagram showing which explanatory variables you are dealing with and how they relate.
- Link this explanation to the conceptual framework.

PRELIMINARY EXPLORATION OF THE DATA

- Complete simple descriptive summaries of selected variables.
- Look carefully at the results to see if they make sense.
- Check for consistency in sample sizes and missing values.
- Consider the interpretations and implications, and how these focus further analysis.

BUILD REGRESSION MODELS FOR KEY OUTCOME VARIABLES

- Use your judgement to choose the most appropriate set of explanatory variables to include in the model, explore 2 or 3 models, and look at the results to see if they make sense.
- Save model predicted values and residuals (unexplained components of variability), since residual analysis may help to identify outliers and lead to more data checking.

REPORTING THE RESULTS OF ANALYSIS

- Specify the population to which the results apply e.g. urban, rural.
- Make sure the results will be understandable for the intended audience.
- Do not suggest causality when you cannot prove it.
- Avoid technical jargon, e.g. the Minister of Education needs to be able to understand economic information.
- Consider the policy implications, including what the results mean, what policy makers can do with this information.

6. Dissemination and Advocacy

INITIAL DISSEMINATION OF THE RESULTS

Issues to consider include:

- Writing the preliminary report.
- Planning for initial dissemination.

Writing the preliminary report

The next stage, once analysis of data from the first round is complete, is producing a preliminary report. Young Lives has followed the successful practice of, for example, the DHS and LSMS, in producing a preliminary national report fairly quickly. In this preliminary report analysis only goes so far and is then followed up by further analysis which is included in later reports.

Practical points

- Develop a realistic timeframe for producing the preliminary report before you publicise when it will be available. In the Young Lives project, it will have taken approximately 8 months from completing the first round of data collection to producing the national preliminary reports.
- It is important to show some initial findings, in order to maintain interest in the project. However, because of the limitations of preliminary data and the potential for misinterpretation of the preliminary results, you need to be cautious about drawing conclusions. It is preferable to carry out further, multivariate analysis and to include the results of this in later reports than to draw inappropriate conclusions too early, otherwise you risk of undermining the credibility of the project.
- Develop a clear and logical structure for your preliminary report. Young Lives has developed guidance on a common structure for such reports (see outline below).

SECTION	CONTENT (SOURCE)	NO. OF PAGES
Summary		2
Introduction	i. What is known about childhood poverty in this country from existing data (<i>key results of literature review</i>)	4
	ii. Policy context: What current and proposed policies might impact on childhood poverty (<i>policy monitoring matrices</i>)	3
	iii. Key actors (<i>institutional analysis</i>); acknowledge role and composition of advisory panels	3
Methods	i. The index child household, 8-year-old household, 8-year-old child and community questionnaires; summary of sections plus main additions or modifications to the core questionnaires (include actual questionnaires in an appendix not separately as they can get lost).	4
	ii. Study sites; sampling outline and rationale for selection of sites (include more detailed description of the sample in an appendix); response rates; description of communities.	3
	iii. Organising and implementing fieldwork (training, supervision, time schedule, length of interviews, procedures used for quality control, tracking).	3
	iv. Data analysis methods (coding, data entry, software used)	2
Results	i. Index child questionnaire (<i>tables from tabulation plan with commentary</i>); cross-reference to other study findings. Note: only include bivariate analysis; multivariate analysis will go into later reports.	30
	ii. 8-year-old questionnaire (<i>tables from tabulation plan</i>); focus on child outcome indicators	15
Policy implications	Although you will only have cross-sectional data it should still be possible to identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Policy implications. ii. Topics for further analysis from this round. iii. 'Things to watch out for' in the next round. 	6

Planning for initial dissemination

Young Lives teams have already established plans for disseminating the preliminary report, and for producing and distributing other outputs from the project. Examples of outputs planned include further national reports using multivariate analysis to explore issues of particular interest, and national policy briefs targeted at policy makers.

Practical points

- Plan early on what outputs you will produce and how you will disseminate them, to ensure that the findings are made available to policy makers and other key stakeholders in a

timely fashion. If you wait too long, the data will be out of date and will have less impact. Remember that outputs will need to be presented in different ways to different audiences. For example, Young Lives is planning to produce a range of products drawing on the preliminary report, including short press briefs that highlight the most important findings, and a summary and separate policy briefs for decision makers. Summaries of research findings for non-specialist audiences will also be produced in accessible, non-technical language.

- Consider the most appropriate way to disseminate the preliminary findings in an appropriate way to the communities and households that participated in the data collection.
- Allow enough time and allocate adequate funding for dissemination of the findings.
- Dissemination plans should identify key objectives, audiences, messages, dissemination methods and channels. Be aware that you will need to highlight different aspects of the research findings in different ways for different audiences.
- Identify important media channels and outlets, for example, radio, television, newspapers. Holding a press conference can help to generate wider media interest.

ADVOCACY AND ONGOING DISSEMINATION

Issues to consider include:

- Initial preparation for advocacy at the beginning of the project
- Planning and implementing advocacy and dissemination activities throughout the project.

In many research projects, dissemination and advocacy are left until the research is complete and the results are available. However, there is no need to wait for the preliminary results to be analysed before you start planning for advocacy. Advocacy is one of the key components of Young Lives and therefore, much effort has been put into laying the groundwork to enable more successful advocacy following the publication of the results.

Prior to advocacy that sets out to influence policy, the national coordinators have worked towards four key goals: raising the profile of the project; raising awareness of childhood poverty as a policy issue in its own right; building up networks with key stakeholders who may be advocacy partners or the target of Young Lives advocacy strategies in the future; ensuring there is an understanding and acceptance (amongst those who count) of the Young Lives approach to studying childhood poverty. By working towards these four goals, the project ensures that any advocacy messages which arise from the Young Lives research reach a wide audience that knows what Young Lives is, understands why its focus on childhood poverty is important and accepts its results as methodologically sound. Whilst this can never guarantee that the evidence-based recommendations arising from Young Lives will influence policy, it does mean that it is more difficult for policy makers to reject the findings on purely technical grounds.

Initial preparation for advocacy at the beginning of the project

Practical points

- Choose a catchy, easy to remember title for the project. For longitudinal studies it is also useful to avoid a title that is timebound. The Young Lives project was originally called the *Children of the Millennium* project. However, this was changed once the team realised that by 2010 or 2015, referring to the new millennium would be less relevant.
- Design a memorable logo for the project. In one country, children themselves designed the project logo.
- Start building up networks for future advocacy before you go ahead with project activities. This may not be straightforward - most people view research and advocacy as sequential activities and it can be difficult to interest some audiences before you have any results available. It is very important to establish good relationships with policy makers and to use the most appropriate methods to reach them. For example, face-to-face meetings, videos or briefing sessions are often more effective ways to interest decision makers than producing lengthy documents that they do not have time to read.
- Develop links with other important stakeholders, such as academic institutions and NGOs, to increase their awareness of issues affecting children. In one of the Young Lives countries, the project organised initial meetings with a range of experts to seek their inputs and support.
- Consider how best to 'sell' the project to your audience. For example, some may require technical information and statistics to convince them, while others will respond to children's real life stories. Develop a short, simple and attractive leaflet about the project's purpose and methods to give to people who are interested.
- Use the members of the advisory panels as advocates. As discussed earlier, the advisory panels in the Young Lives countries have so far been very effective 'champions' of the project, and will play a critical role in disseminating the results and ensuring that these are used.
- Organise an official project launch. In all four countries, the official launch helped both to increase the profile of the project and to obtain political support. The presence of key policy makers at the launch demonstrated their commitment and made sure that the event received widespread media coverage. Make sure the launch is interesting and attracts attention. One country made a video about the project, and the situation of children living in poverty, to show at the launch.

Planning and implementing advocacy and dissemination activities throughout the project

Young Lives places particular emphasis on ongoing advocacy efforts, to maintain interest in the issue of childhood poverty and, in the future, disseminate the results and lobby for policy change. Continuing advocacy-related activities are also important in a longitudinal study to maintain interest (since the results will not be available for some time), and to support fundraising efforts (since few donors are willing to finance studies for more than 3-5 years).

Practical points

- Any advocacy in the initial phase of the project will be much more general, than advocacy in subsequent rounds, as there will be no longitudinal results available and no further detailed analysis from thematic studies. However, highlighting the importance of those childhood poverty issues covered by the project is important. Once the preliminary results are available, tentative policy recommendations will be possible or the results can be used to generate debate on key issues.
- Plan to meet with policy makers and other key stakeholders on a regular basis. This helps to maintain relationships and keep people informed of developments. Remember also that people may move on and that you need to establish relationships with their successors.
- Plan activities to raise public awareness of childhood poverty and of the project, for example, television or radio interviews. This can also help to support your efforts to obtain support from policy makers.
- Handling the media effectively is very important. It can be a good idea to hire a professional firm to handle relationships with the media, especially if the partner organisations have limited experience in this area. If you do this, make sure the firm is well briefed so that they put across the right messages. It is also important to work with someone who has communications experience to ensure that the results are presented in such a way that they generate media interest.
- Plan activities to maintain interest. The Young Lives country teams used a range of methods to keep the issue of children and poverty on the agenda and to maintain interest while the first round of fieldwork was being conducted. These included organising children's short story and poster competitions, establishing Young Lives journalism awards and fellowships for writing on childhood poverty and childhood well-being, organising a travelling photo exhibition depicting children's lives and aspirations, and disseminating an electronic newsletter.
- Use existing channels for disseminating information, such as NGO newsletters or websites, and opportunities, such as days devoted to children or women. In one country, the Young Lives team used Mothers Day to highlight the impact on children of pressures on poor mothers.
- Establish a documentary archive of information gathered for the country literature review and other information that you can use as source material for future advocacy.
- Use significant stages in the project, such as the start of the fieldwork, to focus your dissemination/advocacy efforts. In one country, the team organised press briefings in each region as the research got underway, including interviews with mothers and children.
- Use the preliminary results for advocacy, but be careful how you do this. Since the results are only preliminary, it is better to use them to highlight emerging themes that may be of interest to policy makers rather than to advocate for specific policy changes.
- Consider how you can use the results to target different sectoral interests. The data will provide information that will be of interest to those working in sectors such as health and nutrition (for example, about antenatal care and delivery, breastfeeding practices,

immunisation, acute and chronic illness, injuries and accidents, child development, and access to and uptake of services), education (for example, educational attainment of households and communities, patterns of school attendance and reasons for non-attendance, measures of literacy and numeracy, access to and uptake of schooling), and environment (for example, natural disasters affecting the community, infrastructure, patterns of land use, availability of energy supplies and energy use for cooking and heating).

7. Final Word

Young Lives is a challenging project, as the experience and lessons learned in this document illustrate. Despite these challenges, Young Lives has the potential to provide much valuable information about childhood poverty and the way in which children's welfare is influenced by the policy, community and family environment. The project approach is of value for two key reasons: it analyses changes in children's welfare and development over time and it links research to policy and advocacy.

There have been few holistic, longitudinal studies of childhood poverty and well-being in developing countries. While much useful 'snapshot' information is available, little is known about whether childhood poverty is improving or deteriorating or about the underlying reasons. By assessing children at the ages of 1, 4, 8, 11 and 14 years, Young Lives will assess changes in their situation over time and provide useful insights into the long-term effects of poverty in early childhood. The Young Lives approach also aims to capture the dynamic of moving in and out of poverty and to assess how childhood poverty is affected by, for example, changes in livelihoods and access to services.

Traditionally, research and advocacy have been carried out separately, with research conducted first and consideration only given to how the results will be used for advocacy once the research is completed. Researchers often have a poor understanding of policy issues and conduct research without involving policy makers. As a result, findings lack policy relevance and fail to influence policy or programmes. Young Lives takes a different approach. Key policy makers and practitioners are involved from the start, so that findings are relevant and are used to inform policy and action. The project is carrying out research and advocacy activities in parallel, bringing together a national team of research and advocacy experts from academic and NGO partners, to ensure that findings are policy relevant and are effectively communicated and disseminated.

The Young Lives team hope this document has provided a useful overview of the process of setting up and carrying out the research, initial analysis and policy and advocacy work on the first phase of the project. If the accompanying documentation and the material on the Young Lives website (www.younglives.org.uk) fails to answer all your queries, please contact younglives@younglives.org.uk.

Appendix

List of Accompanying Technical Documents

Document 1	The Young Lives Conceptual Framework
Document 2	Policy Tracking Guidelines and Example
Document 3	Core Household Questionnaire (caregiver of 1-year-old)
Document 4	Core Household Questionnaire (caregiver of 8-year-old)
Document 5	Child Questionnaire (with 8-year-old)
Document 6	Justification Document (1-year-old and 8-year-old household questionnaire)
Document 7	Justification Document (Child Questionnaire)
Document 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Community Questionnaire b) Community Justification Document c) Community Fieldworker Manual
Document 9	<p>Examples of Flow Diagrams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) child development b) children's perceptions c) health d) life skills e) literacy f) mental health g) nutrition
Document 10	Thematic Study Guidelines
Document 11	Young Lives Budget Pro-forma
Document 12	Young Lives Approach to Sampling
Document 13	Ethical Guidelines for Working with Children
Document 14	Fieldworker Manual for 1-Year-Old and 8-Year-Old Household Questionnaire
Document 15	Fieldworker Manual for 8-year-old Child Questionnaire
Document 16	Young Lives Data Analysis Pack
Document 17	Summary of Key Data Management Issues