



UNIVERSITY OF  
**OXFORD**

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

# *Ethics of disseminating findings of social research with children - practical experiences from Young Lives*

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

Paper presented at UEA seminar series November 2011  
*As well as the subject:  
additional dimensions in development research ethics*

# Background to Young Lives

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

# Sample and methods

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

# Ethics

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

# Levels of dissemination

1. Research 'reciprocity' – giving something back – to communities, children and families
2. Publications
3. Policy engagement

# 1. Research reciprocity in longitudinal research

- Giving something back? Varies by country and context
- Raised expectations that children will be helped by the research
- Parents want to know how their children are doing
- Fear of abduction (Peru)- websites
- NGOs - previous experiences of 'projects' matter

## 2. Publications

- Journal papers, working papers
- Policy briefs
- Country reports,
- Film, photo galleries,
- Child profiles
- Extracts used in textbooks for children in Ethiopia
- Use of images

# 3. Policy engagement

- Children's 'participation' – UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) Article 12
- 'Outliers':
- Children express concerns that fall outside narrow scope of survey questions
- Eg: alcohol use and domestic violence

# Policy 'impacts'

- 'Attribution' – pressure from donors and pressure from REF processes within Universities
- Cause-and-effect difficult if not impossible to trace (cf. Medical model)
- Is this a question of ethics?
- Yes, because it links to purpose of research and informed consent
- 'Direct' and 'indirect' policy/practice influence
- EG Oak-funded sub-study in Ethiopia and India

# Discussion

- An ongoing learning process
- Multiple pathways of influence – children/parents/community to research teams, research teams to YL Oxford, YL Oxford to University Research Ethics committee and back again
- How to influence research ethics committees?

# References

- Bartlett, R. L. (2009) Code of ethics for economists. In J.Peil & I.van Staveren (eds) *Handbook of economics and ethics*. Cheltenham, Edward Elgar Publishing.
- De Martino, G.F. (2010) *The economist's oath. On the need for and content of professional economics ethics*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Morrow, V. (2012) The ethics of social research with children and families in Young Lives: Practical Experiences. In M Bourdillon & J Boyden (eds) *Childhood poverty, multidisciplinary approaches*. Palgrave/Macmillan, London. Or Young Lives Working Paper No.50. [www.younglives.org.uk](http://www.younglives.org.uk)
- See also:
- Atkinson, A. (2011) 'The restoration of welfare economics', *American Economic Review: Papers and Proceedings* 101(3): 157-161.
- Shiller, R. and Shiller, V. (2011) 'Economists as worldly philosophers', *American Economic Review: Papers and Proceedings* 101(3): 171-175