



Young Lives is a research project coordinated by the Group for the Analysis of Development (GRADE) and the Nutritional Research Institute, in collaboration with Oxford University. It is a longitudinal study that aims at mapping the living conditions of children born between the years 2001 and 2002, by following a group of children over a period of 15 years. Young Lives aims to generate capacities and produce information on the links between poverty and children in poor countries, with the objective of providing a solid base on which public policy decisions can be made.



Innovation

The study is being conducted in Peru and three other countries (Ethiopia, India and Vietnam), which makes the depth and range of the Young Lives database unique. Several innovations have been established to improve the quality of the data, including: (i) translation of all questionnaires used in the past; (ii) double entry of the data; and (iii) scanning of all questionnaires in order to provide online access to double check data during the analytical phase.

As for the questionnaire, a detailed account of the respondent's network of family and friends has been introduced to minimize attrition rates throughout the 15-year period. Further, the introduction of GPS coding of household dwellings allows for better tracking of the sample and the connection with secondary data sources, which greatly enhances the usefulness of the data.

Usefulness of the Data



The project makes available quantitative and qualitative data at the individual, household, and community levels to contribute to create a detailed picture of children's experiences and well-being, and link it to information about their households and communities set within the national context. This provides researchers

and policy makers with a rich, in-depth analysis of children's lives and how they are affected by poverty and government policies.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative evidence provided by the project has been extremely useful to inform public officials about, for example, the need to change the emphasis of their child care programs and convert them from "just" daycare centers to programs that help children fully develop their potential.



Lessons Learned

To assure the project's long-term integrity and the quality of the data, it is important to dispel certain tensions, such as the tension between respondents' comfort, and sometimes even fatigue, and the scientists' need for broad, in-depth data.

This project has addressed those issues by working with images and audiovisual materials, by giving supervisors careful training and assessing their skills through role playing and research piloting, and by designing and applying protocols for standardization in such areas as practice interviews, role playing, leadership skills, and psychological tests.

