

Editor's Note

Dear readers,

We are pleased to welcome you to the December 2020 CRPF quarterly newsletter. This edition celebrates the 10th anniversary of the CRPF, and presents summaries of Young Lives papers on Educational Trajectories, School to Work Transition, and Work Experiences presented at the CRPF monthly seminars. This research is part of a series of eight working papers on transitions to adulthood.

We look forward to your comments, suggestions and contributions. For more information, please contact us via crpf.ethiopia@gmail.com or 011 1540121.



The Child Research and Practice Forum: Tenth Anniversary

The Child Research and Practice Forum (CRPF) is a network that holds monthly meetings at the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth (MOWCY) to present and discuss research findings.

How was the CRPF created?

The idea to establish a network to bring together researchers, policy-makers and practitioners concerned with issues to do with children and youth was born at a consultation meeting organized by Young Lives in April 2010 to discuss findings of [research on Orphans and Vulnerable Groups](#). At the meeting participants suggested that such research should be presented regularly to a wider audience. An informal committee was established with representatives from the African Child Policy Forum CHAD-ET, Concern World Wide, Consortium of Christian Development Associations (CCDA), Forum on Sustainable Child Development, Norwegian Church Aid, Oak Foundation, Plan Ethiopia, Save the Children UK, and Young Lives. [The first CRPF meeting was held on 24th September 2010](#). The Steering committee in addition to the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth and the above mentioned organisations has included representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence, Goal, Policy Studies Institute, RETRAK and World Vision.

What does the CRPF do?

Monthly meetings: The meetings consist of one or two presentations, and are held on the last Thursday of every month at MoWCY (and from April to December 2020 through Zoom sessions due to COVID-19).

Newsletters: So far 16 newsletters have been produced providing news and summaries on key topics presented at the CRPF meetings. The newsletters have been printed and distributed at meetings and events, and are available on the [Young Lives Ethiopia website](#).

Annual summary publications: The presentations made during the year have been summarized in booklets, nine of which have been produced so far and are also available on the [Young Lives Ethiopia website](#).

Annual workshops: The CRPF has also held annual workshops on different themes, including *Children on the move* and *Violence affecting children*.

The Forum has a mailing list of over 600 members who are sent the presentations, newsletters and annual summaries.

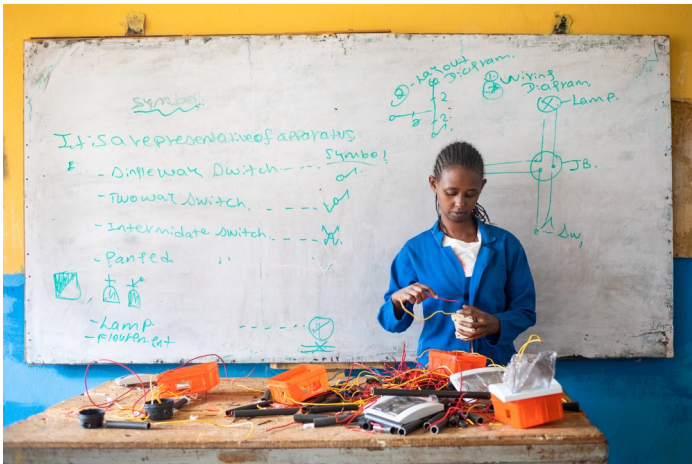
Funding sources:

The CRPF has received funding from its activities and publications from OAK Foundation, Young Lives, UNICEF, The UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO), GAGE and African Child Policy Forum. This year's activities including four newsletters and three annual summary publications have been supported by UNICEF and FCDO.

Research Summaries from CRPF presentations

Slow Progression: Educational Trajectories of Young Men and Women in Ethiopia

Yisak Tafero and Agazi Tiemelissan

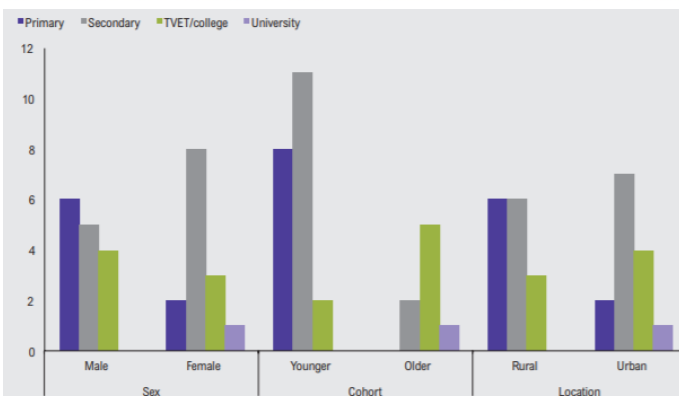


Key research findings

This study shows that students have experienced slow school progression at all levels. Many young people who repeated grades have either dropped out altogether or are still in school as adults.

- Four out of five have experienced one or more interruptions in their school lives.
- The Young Lives longitudinal survey shows that by age 15, about 65 per cent were over the intended age for their grades.
- Only one of the 29 young people included in the qualitative study has moved on to university.
- The main causes of interruption are poverty, heavy workloads, illness or injuries, or school-related problems such as failing exams or lack of interest caused by poor teaching.
- Prolonged educational trajectories mean female students are susceptible to marriage before finishing school.
- This raises policy issues, including the need for comprehensive social protection, how to enable students to combine school and work, and the need to improve the quality and equity of education.

Figure 1: Educational levels of young people in education at ages 18 and 25, by age, sex and location (2019)



Source: Young Lives fifth-wave qualitative sub-sample (N=29)

Policy recommendations

1. Ensure comprehensive social protection and healthcare

Both the survey and the qualitative data show that children from poor families and rural areas are prone to dropout, grade repetition and being over-age for their grade. We suggest that a comprehensive social protection programme is needed for children from poor

backgrounds. This could include school feeding, healthcare and support with educational materials. Illness and injuries were strongly associated with school dropout. Children who were unable to get immediate and proper healthcare were forced to stay at home or use traditional remedies. It is vital that schoolchildren have access to suitable healthcare so that they do not interrupt their education.

2. Support children and young people to combine work and schooling

Workload seems to affect rural children and those from poor families in particular, and may impact schooling in two ways. First, working children may miss classes or have no time to study. Second, work may expose them to injuries or illnesses that force them to drop out of school. We noted that child work often had a negative impact on children's educational trajectories and achievements. On the other hand, we also found a number of working young people who were able to fund their school and even their college education themselves. Some of those in private colleges were also covering their costs through their earnings from work. More importantly, some young people used work as a route to learn new skills. We therefore suggest that, while children should not be exposed to hard or excessive work that affects their schooling or health, they should not be discouraged from combining schooling with work.

3. Improve the quality of education

The poor quality of education in public schools, especially those in rural areas, has discouraged many young people. Some have left school, while others who could afford it have transferred to private schools. In line with the Ethiopian Government's commitment to UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, the Ministry of Education needs to work hard on delivering good-quality education at all levels for schoolchildren, irrespective of location and economic status.

4. Ensure equity

Equity in terms of the quality of education could be reached by reducing the gap between the poor and the rich, rural and urban areas, and boys and girls (SDG 4). Prolonged educational trajectories are making some female students susceptible to marriage before finishing school. Efforts by parents, children and the Government to improve girls' education can only be valuable if girls finish their schooling and find employment. Following SDG 5,5 education should ensure gender equity to make girls and young women equal citizens in society.

Research Summaries from CRPF presentations

The Unrealised Promise of Education: The Challenge of School to Work Transition in Ethiopia.

Yisak Tafere and Nardos Chuta

Key research findings

- There is a clear link between **poverty and child work** – children from poor families engage in paid work at the expense of their schooling. Nineteen of the 27 young people in our sample left school before finishing their secondary education to find work.

- Children and young people often have **high aspirations**, which are not matched by available **job opportunities**. In all communities, job opportunities are too limited to accommodate the growing number of young people seeking employment. Among our sample, only six of those who left school for work made it to formal employment.

- There is a marked difference between **urban and rural** young people. In urban areas they are mainly running their own small businesses, while in rural areas they continue with family work, such as subsistence agriculture, rather than undertaking formal jobs.

- **The gender gap** is relatively narrow when children are at school but widens during the transition to the labour market. For example, among the 13 members of the cobblestone cooperative in Zeytuni, only two are women, and they are doing clerical work.

- The Government's **Technical, Vocational and Educational Training (TVET)** scheme does not meet the demands of the existing job market, nor is it seen by young people and their families as a positive route into work.

- The Government's **Job Creation Commission and Youth Revolving Fund** do not sufficiently address the needs of young people from poor families, nor is there enough coordination between various institutions and with the private sector.

Policy recommendations

1. Poverty alleviation

Young people's poor educational levels are mainly related to poverty. Children from poor families are doing paid work at the expense of their schooling and skills training, and this affects the kinds of jobs they are able to get. The Government's poverty alleviation programme, with a focus on youth employment and social protection for young people from poorer and vulnerable households, should remain a major priority.

2. Education: quality and equity

In order to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, the Government should improve the quality of education in state-run schools so that more children who are willing and able can pass national exams and move to the next level, such as college and university education. The Government intends to make Grade 12 the formal end of secondary education, instead of Grade 10, which could result in young people being better prepared for the labour market. Extended and uniform schooling would help the transition either to university education or to TVET. This would make a transition from 'full schooling' to 'full employment' possible.

3. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

TVET needs to be seen as a realistic and positive route to work. Options for improvement could include the following:

- Expanding the scheme to include those who fail in Grades 11 and 12 and are not currently allowed to join TVET;
- Strengthening TVET so that it prepares young people to fit the demands of the existing job market by providing high-quality and relevant training in entrepreneurship, and soft and technical skills training, as well as supporting young people to pass Levels III and IV, which the market demands;
- Providing context-focused training that takes into account the local job market. In Young Lives sites this includes skills training in vegetable growing, cobblestone production and other agricultural activities. It should also include career guidance (see below);
- Ensuring that all levels of training are available across the country so that young people get equal access to it (as promised in SDG 4), irrespective of their economic status, location or gender;
- Expanding access to the scheme, and providing the necessary equipment and resources, as well as qualified trainers;
- Enhancing coordination between TVET and employers to facilitate young people's transition into paid work.

4. Career guidance

The young people in this study did not receive any career guidance during their school and work lives. Career guidance should be included in the curriculum and integrated into the TVET scheme. In the context of slow school progression and limited job opportunities, professional guidance plays a crucial role in career choices.

5. Gender

TVET colleges and cooperatives favour young men over young women. This calls for serious consideration in school to work transition programmes, which should provide equal access to males and females. Young women should be encouraged to train in traditionally male-dominated skill fields (e.g. auto mechanics or machine operating). Job training and apprenticeships in the informal sector, which involve more young women, should also be part of TVET.

6. Social norms and community attitudes

Many adults expect the Government to take on the entire responsibility for youth employment. They are also reluctant to share their resources to support youth enterprises. The Job Creation Commission and local authorities should create programmes to raise awareness of the importance of youth employment so that communities can be a part of the solution.

7. Encouraging private investors and supporting decent work

Growing private investment and public projects in the study communities have directly benefited young people. All the respondents considered the expansion of job opportunities to be a national priority to reduce youth unemployment. The Government should encourage private investors, and local authorities need to coordinate with local communities to share resources for youth self-employment. Job opportunities, as much as possible, need to reflect the skills and aspirations of young people. They also need to be in line with the International Labour Organization's definition of decent work so that young people are paid adequately and working conditions are improved. This would enhance human capital development by encouraging families and young people to invest in education and thereby contribute to national economic growth.

8. Coordination of youth employment institutions

For a better process of transition from school to work, it is important to improve the coordination of the institutions and bodies involved, namely schools, TVET colleges, private colleges, universities and employers (see Figure 1). The process entails schooling, training, career guidance, job allocation and the promotion of equity. The Job Creation Commission should play a greater role in facilitating communication.

9. Capacity of the Job Creation Commission

The Job Creation Commission and other local agencies are playing a vital role in facilitating youth employment. However, this study found many issues that need attention. The offices are poorly funded and staffed, which means they are unable to carry out their plans. In some areas, local institutions were able to cover less than 50 per cent of planned tasks. Their resources need to be increased and their coordination capacity should be strengthened so that they can respond to the growing employment demands of young people.

10. Resources for youth employment

The Government's Youth Revolving Fund is helping young people start their own businesses. However, both young people and officials agree that the collateral of 10 per cent and interest of 8 per cent were too high particularly for poor young people and their families. This discourages young people from taking out loans to start work. The collateral requirement should be removed and the interest rate lowered. Young people want to go to school and find decent work, but they often face many challenges in doing so. While the Government has improved education and set up a number of schemes to support young people to make the move from school to work, the specific improvements suggested in this policy brief would go a long way towards achieving gender equality and supporting young women and young men, particularly those from poorer families, to be able to fulfil their childhood aspirations and improve their livelihoods.

Research Summaries from CRPF presentations

Jobs, Businesses and Cooperatives: Young Men and Women's Transitions to Employment and Income Generation in Ethiopia

Alula Pankhurst and Yisak Tafere

Key research findings

- Young people's **transition to the labour market is slower** in Ethiopia than in the other Young Lives countries.
 - Most of the young people are **working for themselves, mainly in the informal sector**, but only a few of these have managed to establish viable businesses.
 - There is a mismatch between **the jobs available and educated young people's expectations** of office jobs.
 - Daily labour in **agricultural and industrial work** provides a useful source of additional income. However, wages are low and conditions poor, and most young people seek to move on as soon as they can to other jobs or their own businesses. Moreover, **health and environmental** risks are causes for concern.
 - The Government's preferred job creation model promoting **youth cooperatives** has faced many challenges. These include limited involvement of women and graduates, problems with loan modalities, and young people's preference for working independently or with groups of their own choice.

Policy recommendations

1. Address the mismatch between the jobs available and young people's expectations

Young people who have gone through the school system expect to find office jobs but these are very limited. Addressing this requires improving the relevance and performance of Technical and Vocational Education colleges, fostering partnerships between government and the private sector and the promotion of private sector jobs by the Job Creation Commission. It also involves facilitating business and entrepreneurial ventures by reducing bureaucracy and improving access to credit, as well as putting more emphasis on non-farm rural investment and supporting a more diverse range of occupations in the job creation schemes.

2. Promote safe and flexible part-time work for older adolescents

Many adolescents in their mid-teens work as well as attend school, especially those from poorer families, who need to earn income to support their families. Options for more flexible schooling, including shift, part-time, evening and weekend, and distance learning should be more readily available, while ensuring that quality is not compromised. Preventing harmful and underpaid child labour requires the promotion and regulation of appropriate work for adolescents.

3. Address the barriers to women's active involvement in the labour force

Young women are under-represented in the labour force. Redressing this imbalance requires greater promotion of education and training, and of equal working opportunities, for girls and women. Women who do work outside the home face challenges in combining domestic work and childcare with paid and income-generating work, and many are obliged to give up other work when they get married or have children. Improving women's opportunities requires more flexible working conditions. It also requires an improvement in childcare services, without which women are unable to leave the home. Furthermore, there is a need for more general changes in social norms relating to paid and unpaid work and the division of labour between women and men in the home.

4. Improve working conditions and pay in agricultural and industrial work

Agricultural and industrial development have created more job opportunities for young people. However, in some cases health and environmental risks require further monitoring and mitigation measures. Low pay and in some cases poor working conditions mean that many young people only engage in such work if they have no other options. Further regulation of working conditions is required, while workers' pay and conditions should be improved.

5. Safeguard and improve the livelihoods of the poorest and most vulnerable young people

Young men and women from very poor families and those facing economic or social shocks are more likely to do wage labour and work in low-paid menial jobs. Providing better opportunities for their education, training and work, and improving access to credit and social protection for vulnerable families can help prevent these young people from dropping out of school early and enable them to combine school and work, find appropriate work or establish their own businesses.

6. Address challenges with the youth cooperative model

The MSE cooperative model of youth group job creation faces a number of challenges. The limited involvement of graduates requires the types of work included in the scheme to be rethought. Non-farming rural enterprises and individual businesses should be supported. The de facto exclusion of women in many youth groups requires the promotion of types of work in which women can engage, establishing more women's groups and prioritising young women's private enterprises.

7. Improve cooperative group and loan modalities for young people

■ Broaden the scope of what loans can be used for to better address youth preferences.

- Enable existing self-initiated groups to form cooperatives.
- Remove the requirement for parental loan guarantees.
- Reduce bureaucracy and red tape and prevent nepotism and corruption in the setting up and running of group and individual businesses.

Most importantly, the job creation model needs recalibrating to put more emphasis on supporting individual businesses and entrepreneurship.

Interested to know about CRPF?

The Child Research and Practice Forum (CRPF) was established in 2010 to promote work on child research, policy and practice. CRPF makes use of monthly seminars, quarterly newsletters and annual publications as a means to achieve its objectives. The publications are also available at the Young Lives Ethiopia website.

The CRPF has been funded by OAK foundation until 2018. The CRPF has functioned with collaborative financial and technical support from MoWCY, GAGE, UNICEF, Young Lives and other national and international NGOs. **The publication of this newsletter is funded by UNICEF through an agreement with Young Lives.**

If you want to know more, please contact us via crpf.ethiopia@gmail.com.

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