

New knowledge on children and young people

A Synthesis of Evidence from the ESRC-DFID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation

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Improving children and young people's (CYP) wellbeing, and recognising the role they can play in creating a more sustainable world will be critical to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This timely report provides insights into how ESRC-DFID funded research has provided new knowledge that can inform and strengthen policy making in relation to CYP issues and help meet global development ambitions.

Key research findings

- Recognising young people's agency and the role they can play in research and policy making around the issues that matter to them most is critical.
- Enhanced participation and community engagement programmes amongst the most marginalised can contribute to reduction in inequalities of new born survival rates.
- Religion can have a significant impact on [child wellbeing outcomes](#) in India.
- CYP's psychological wellbeing is positively associated with staying in school and negatively associated with entering the [labour market in China](#). However for [CYP in Tanzania](#) there is often a clash between their perceptions of the long term gain of education and the more immediate benefits of employment.
- Marriage is often viewed by both CYP and their families as a [key livelihood strategy](#).
- Young people are [using mobile technologies](#) to access services and build up social capital. They also have concerns around mobile phones and the potential negative impact on their personal safety and wellbeing.



Since 2005 world class social science research funded by the ESRC-DFID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research has generated significant knowledge about CYP and ways of improving their life chances in low- and middle-income countries, despite the fund not having a specific focus on CYP. In particular the research has deepened understanding and provided insights in a number of key areas.

- Improving education and health outcomes for CYP in line with the SDGs.
- Offering new thinking on how policymaking at national level can advance CYP's wellbeing.
- Addressing current and emerging contemporary trends and their potential impact on CYP.
- Highlighting the role of CYP in identifying and addressing the issues which affect them most.

“New insights on improving children and young people’s wellbeing which will be critical to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”.

The report drew together examples from 126 research grants undertaken in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, North Africa, central Asia and the Caucasus, and found that nearly a third of these grants had generated new insights which could have significant implications for improving CYP's wellbeing.

1. Improving education and health outcomes for CYP in line with priorities as set out in the SDGs. Specific examples include:

- [Houweling’s research](#) on ways of reducing infant mortality among the poorest and most disadvantaged groups.
- [Pridmore’s research](#) on open, distance and flexible learning for vulnerable children.
- [Coast’s insights](#) on the factors that put adolescent girls and young women in Zambia at increased risk of unsafe abortion.

Key policy lessons/implications of research

- Mechanisms to promote young people's agency and an enhanced role in decision and policy making processes at all levels should be designed and implemented.
- Policy makers need to recognise existing knowledge gaps around social movements, religious and political ideologies, peacebuilding, addressing intergenerational poverty and identity-based social exclusion in relation to CYP and their wellbeing and seek to address these in future research calls.
- More attention needs to be given to the impact of religion on CYP's wellbeing. Understanding of how mobile technologies can be used to provide services to CYP and improve wellbeing, as well as the negative impacts they can have on CYPs lives, needs to be strengthened.
- National and regional governments need to place greater emphasis on community engagement programmes to reduce inequalities in newborn survival rates.
- Addressing social norms around gender and marriage is key to improving CYP's wellbeing and reducing poverty more widely.

2. Offering new thinking on how policymaking at national level in countries such as China, India and Mexico can advance CYP's wellbeing. Specific examples include:

- [Hannum's research](#) on multiple aspects of child wellbeing in China.
- [Attanasio's research](#) in Mexico on Oportunidades, a large cash transfer programme.
- [Bhalotra's exploration](#) of the factors explaining differences in child survival between religious groups in India.

3. Addressing current and emerging contemporary trends such as mobile technologies and their potential impact on CYP. Specific examples include:

- [Porter's research](#) on young people's use of mobile phones in three African countries.
- [Bryceson's research](#) on the social dynamics of mining in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- [Wahba's research](#) on young people's migration aspirations in Morocco and Egypt.

4. Highlighting how CYP's direct involvement in research and policymaking around the issues that affect them most is critical. Specific examples include:

- [Bryceson's research](#) on young people's migration to and work in mining settlements.
- [Kantor and Pain's](#) and [Ansell's research](#) on young people's livelihood strategies.

The research has made an important contribution to knowledge about CYP's issues and how they can be addressed in the future at international level, by frameworks such as the SDGs, or by policy makers at regional, national or community level. In particular around health and education issues such as infant mortality rights and school attendance, and current and emerging trends such as migration and mobile technologies which will continue to have an important influence on CYP's lives globally. As work continues to understand and address these issues, CYP's role and agency needs to be recognised and promoted. Their lived experiences and understanding of the issues that affect them most are critical to the design and implementation of effective strategies to improve CYP wellbeing.

Further reading

Marcus, R. Page, E., Stephenson, J. and Walker, D. (2014) New knowledge on children and young people: A Synthesis of Evidence from the ESRC-DFID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research

Houweling, T., Prost, A., Tripathy, P., Nair, N. and Costello, A. (2013a) 'Authors' Response: The Equity Impact of Participatory Women's Groups to Reduce Neonatal Mortality in India: Secondary Analysis of a Cluster Randomised Trial'. *International Journal of Epidemiology* 1(2).

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23509239>

Hannum, E., Wang, J., Glewwe, P., An, X., Park, A., Adams, J., Ge, P. and Sun, D. (2011a) 'The Gansu Survey of Children and Families'. Wave 3 ESRC End of Award Report, RES-167-25-0250. Swindon: ESRC. <https://china.pop.upenn.edu/>

Porter, G., Hampshire, K., Abane, A. et al. (2012) 'Youth, Mobility and Mobile Phones in Africa: Findings from a Three-Country Study'. *Information Technology for Development* 18(2): 145-162.

<http://dro.dur.ac.uk/13949/1/13949.pdf>

Bryceson, D. (2014) 'Youth in Tanzania's Urbanising Mining Settlements: Prospecting a Mineralised Future'. Working Paper 2014/008. Helsinki: UNU-WIDER.

<https://www.wider.unu.edu/sites/default/files/wp2014-008.pdf>

The Impact Initiative for International Development Research exists to increase the uptake and impact of two programmes of research funded through the ESRC-DFID Strategic Partnership. These are: (i) The Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation, and (ii) The Raising Learning Outcomes in Education Systems programme. The Initiative helps identify synergies between these programmes and their grant holders, and supports them to exploit influencing and engagement opportunities and facilitates mutual learning. The Impact Initiative is a collaboration between the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and the University of Cambridge's Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre.

theimpactinitiative.net

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